Summer 2005

The relationship of parental involvement and home culture factors to student achievement

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND HOME CULTURE FACTORS TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

LOUISIANA EDUCATION CONSORTIUM
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

August 2005

LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

July 5, 2005
Date

We hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under our supervision by Leonard James Clark

entitled The Relationship of Parental Involvement and Home Culture Factors to Student Achievement

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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GS Form 13
(5/03)

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine the relationship among student achievement, responsive parent involvement, and home culture factors such as reading aloud, shared reading, oral language, monitored television viewing, and library/ bookstore visits. The study focused on two research questions: (1) Which home culture factors facilitated student achievement? and (2) What did parents do at home to facilitate student achievement? A sample of 240 parents of third graders who took the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* in northwestern and northeastern Louisiana schools completed a survey to determine factors of parent involvement and home culture. An exploratory factor analysis was performed on the responses on a parent survey to determine the independent variables of home culture, which were subdivided into the behaviors of (a) reading aloud and shared reading, (b) oral language, (c) monitored television viewing, (d) library or bookstore visits, (e) discussion of what a child reads, and (f) establishment of a quiet area in which the child could study or read. A Spearman rho correlation ($p < .02$) was performed to determine correlations between factors identified in the study that clustered from the parent survey and achievement results reported in school percentile ranks. Findings indicated that there was no independent variable that best predicted school performance on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills.*

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Date August 15, 2005

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(5/03)

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Increasing concern and attention have focused on the continuing gap between Black student achievement and White student achievement. The 2002 report of the National Assessment of Educational Progress in reading (as cited in Porter, 2003) stated that the gap between the performance of fourth grade Black students and their White counterparts still persisted in reading. Although some improvements were recorded at the fourth grade level, 75% of White students scored at or above basic levels, whereas only 40% of Black students scored at the same level. In addition, 25% of White fourth graders read below basic levels, a decrease in the percentage reading below basic levels since 2000 (NAEP, 2002 as cited in Porter). The data indicated that 60% of Black fourth graders read below basic level, an improvement from 65% in 2000. Nettles and Perna (1997) reported that, according to *The African Education Data Book*, 71% of White fourth graders and 31% of Black fourth grade students scored at or above basic level. Nettles and Perna also found that 37% of White fourth graders but only 9% of Black fourth grade students scored at or above the proficient level. Although 9% of White fourth graders scored at or above the advanced level, only 1% of their Black counterparts did so.

Problem

According to the *No Child Left Behind Act of* 2001 (NCLB), schools in general, and teachers in particular, should be held accountable for preparing children to progress through school with little or no academic difficulty regardless of their readiness for school. Research has indicated that student achievement and performance can be affected negatively by socioeconomic status, single parent home environments, cultural differences, and genetic disparities (Heath, 1983; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Wang, Haertel, & Wahlberg, 1993).

A significant amount of research (Clark, 1983; Lewis, 1995; Wang et al.,) has identified the benefits of parental involvement at the preschool level. A review of the literature also indicated that the home environment was most critical in terms of influencing student achievement (Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Wang et al.). Additionally, Dodici, Draper, and Peterson (2003) and Olds et al. (1997) concluded that the effectiveness of student performance outcome was determined by actual parenting practices and child-parent interactions. Studies conducted by Teale and Sulzby and a study conducted by Heath (1983) particularly circumvented traditional thought and suggested that how parents reared their children might have been more important in determining their academic achievement than what occurred in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence on the amount of and quality of parental involvement indicators and home culture factors that might influence students' later performance on the *ITBS* at the third grade level. Because of *NCLB*, significant emphasis has been placed on school accountability, particularly with respect

to the effectiveness and qualifications of the teachers in the classrooms, further emphasizing the role of educators rather than parents. Although the premise of this study did not conflict with holding schools and teachers accountable, it did not concentrate on what occurred in classrooms but what occurred when children were home with their parents and how parents engaged learning in their home environments. This study sought to investigate parental engagement and home culture factors as they related to student achievement.

Justification for the Study

Many educators believed, and research supported, that socio-economic status, single parent home environments, the mother's level of education, and other cultural factors influenced student achievement (Heath, 1983; Hobbs, 1990; Taylor, 1983). In this view, schools could not have been expected to produce the sort of student achievement gains and performance that society demanded from children. Although the recent education reform movement had been emphatic in terms of what was needed to bridge the achievement performances of the varying groups of students across the nation, little focus had been placed on the dominance of culture, home environment, or emergent literacy (Bennett, 1999). Bennett reported that only one-third of students were proficient readers. In 2000, reading at a basic reading level was still found to be difficult to achieve for 37% of fourth graders in the United States (Donahue, Finnegan, Lutkus, Allen, & Campbell, 2001).

The NCLB requires that states be held accountable for low performing schools. State accountability was illustrated in four main points to which the districts and schools were required to comply: (a) implementation of statewide accountability systems

covering all students with emphasis placed on reading and mathematics, (b) implementation of best practices based on scientific research, (c) provision of options to parents who want their children removed from low performing schools, and (d) flexibility in terms of the use of federal funds for education, provided that accountability requirements were met. This study addressed the role parent involvement and home culture in student achievement and performance outcomes. This study attempted to focus on parental engagement and home culture as they related to overall student achievement.

Theoretical Framework

Singham (2003) inquired as to why the achievement gap among students was yet unresolved. Singham's work provided a framework in which this current study was completed, but does not focus on just Black student and White student achievement. In 1998, Singham discussed three of the following commonly accepted models of thought still popular in the discussion of the achievement gap among students.

1. In Singham's socio-economic model, student achievement parallels with economic dissimilarities. Those researchers who followed this line of reasoning stated that the gap would continue until economic barriers were removed.
2. In the socio-pathological model, proponents believed that "social pathologies within the Black community" (Singham, 1998, p. 10) such as poor parenting, unstable families, lack of initiative, teenage pregnancy, and lack of parental involvement were culpable for the achievement gap.
3. Singham's genetic model proposed to dispel the notion that genetics were blameworthy for the disparity in student achievement.

Singham (1998, 2003) explored these issues regarding the academic performance disparity currently found in student achievement literature. The education community was familiar with these and other reasons why the achievement gap existed, which from Singham's view included:

> biased standardized tests, tests that did not match the learning styles of Black students, less money spent on educating Black students, socio-economic differences, lack of motivation, negative peer pressure, lack of family support for education, teacher biases, and many other possibilities (p. 587).

Further, Singham (2003) countered with reasons found in the home as opposed to institutional reasons for low achievement among some Black students (p. 587). The current study highlighted parental involvement and home culture aspects, which Singham called *social-pathological issues* within the Black community such as poor parenting, unstable families, and lack of parent involvement. The current investigation was to determine whether parental involvement, and home cultural environment would demonstrate any relationship to the schools' attempts to improve student achievement. The current study did not, however, focus on the disparity between Black student and White student achievement.

The theoretical framework of this study was grounded in the work of Russian psychologist, Vygotsky (1962, 1978, 1997). He conducted several studies that focused on children's thinking and cognitive processes. Vygotsky (1978) asserted that society and culture promoted cognitive growth in children. Three premises of Vygotsky's (1997) theory of cognitive development were central to this study of factors that influenced student achievement. His basic premise suggested that children's first cognitive activities

were formed from interactions with their environment and people around them, but children gradually engaged in these cognitive processes independently of their external environment. A study performed by Heath (1983), which also focused on Vygotsky's notion of interactions, showed that the more parents interacted with their children in conversation, the greater the children's chances for success in school. Dialogue with adults was critical for this continued development of cognition.

A second premise of Vygotsky's theory was that thought and language became independent processes for toddlers, and they began to talk as they completed tasks. Here, the importance of having an adult to continue to guide in this self-talk was crucial, and children became more independent in guiding themselves to completion of a task (Ormrod, 2003). Finally, the third premise was that children were gradually able to execute challenging tasks when aided by adults. Heath (1983) and Ormrod (2003) suggested that parental interaction between the parent and the child was critical to a child ultimately being able to perform challenging cognitive tasks.

Research Questions

Two research questions provided the direction for this study.

Research Question 1. Which home culture factors facilitate student achievement?

Research Question 2. What do parents do at home to facilitate student achievement?

To ascertain the home culture factors and parent involvement that facilitate student achievement, a survey was developed and field tested for content validity. The field test was conducted in one northeastern Louisiana school and two northwestern Louisiana schools. Fifteen surveys were distributed with an attached page for parent

comments about the format or concerns about the questions. In addition to the surveys given to the parents, principals were asked to review the surveys and offer recommendations. As a result, some questions in the survey were either removed or rewritten for clarity, elimination of ambiguity, and redundancy of questioning. Survey questions illuminated focus areas as a result of the review of literature. As stated in the research questions of this study, the parent survey was congruent with a focus of the study concerning the relationships among parenting involvement, home culture factors, and student academic achievement. The survey asked parents to rate their experiences with the indicators of a literacy-rich environment as revealed in the review of literature. Survey items 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and13 specifically assessed parenting indicators and literacy while items 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 assessed home culture factors (see Appendix A).

Schools' individual performance on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* was used as indicators of overall student achievement. Individual subtests (i.e. reading, social studies, mathematics), were not used to determine student achievement; instead, this researcher used report of individual school performance as reported by the Louisiana Department of Education. Each variable in the following hypotheses was treated separately.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, six hypotheses were developed.

*H*1 There is a significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* and parents' report of verbal activities in the home.

*H*2 There is a significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* and parents' report of facilitation of reading in the home.

*H*3 There is a significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* and parents' report of non-reading activities in the home.

*H*4 There is a significant relationship among race, income level, educational level and their interactions on the parents' report of verbal activities in the home.

*H*5 There is a significant relationship among race, income level, educational level and their interactions on parents' report of facilitation of reading in the home.

*H*6 There is a significant relationship among race, income level, educational level, and their interaction, on parents' report of non-reading activities in the home.

Assumptions and Limitations

Care was taken to maintain equity in the sampling of the parents represented in the study by purposely sampling schools in various socio-economic communities. The use of 10 schools, all of which were located in the northwest and northeast regions of Louisiana limits the study's generalizability. Although attempts were made to construct the questions to elicit straightforward responses that were also honest answers, it was impossible to guarantee complete honesty in responses to all questions in the survey. In addition, the survey asked for specifically father's or mother's response but not caregiver and specified responses to highest level of education for either parent but not both. To

assess this information, surveys were delivered to individual schools. Principals and teachers sent the surveys, along with stamped self-addressed envelopes, home to parents of fourth graders. Fourth graders took the *ITBS* in third grade during spring testing. Once parents completed the surveys, they were sent to this investigator.

Gay (1981) asserted that one limitation of purposive sampling is that, unlike random sampling, the sample can reflect the researcher's bias in terms of his or her preconceived ideas about the characteristics of the population. Kerlinger (1973) cautioned that using a survey represented only an event in the reality of those responding to it, and the survey "temporarily lifts the respondent out of his own social context" (p. 423).

Definition of Terms

1. Parental involvement: Often defined in different ways according to the schools' parent involvement programs, this study defines parental involvement as the active involvement of parents that promote literacy as defined in questions 3 and 6-13 of the parent survey. This type of engagement includes active monitoring of the child's time, engaging in word play, helping with school work, providing a place for schoolwork to be completed at home, discussing school and learning with the child, listening to the child read, and reading to the child (Finn, 1998).
2. Emergent or early literacy: This term encompasses a diverse ensemble of skills or competencies that are essential to a child's ability to read. These skills are measured by performance on a norm-referenced test of skills. Emergent literacy involves the child's ability to transact with both the oral and written language (Sulzby & Teale, 1991).

3. Readiness: This term includes emphasis on language, listening, and social skills necessary for a child to make the transition to a school environment (Detering, 2003). The language dimension includes the vocabulary, listening, and oral language of the child as well as interaction with written language (Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991).
4. Shared reading: This term is interactive in that it is a time when the child is read to as well as reads to someone else, preferably the parent. This activity includes dialogue between the reader and the listener about the images portrayed by the words in text, whether the text is taken from books or from other written media. Consequently, shared reading allows a child to construct meaning in the written language and oral language (Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Survey items 8 and 11 illustrate shared reading.
5. Home culture: The culture of the child encompasses attitudes, values, customs, and patterns of behavior. Kauchak, Eggen, & Carter, 2002 establishes the importance of the ethnic background of the child, the language, and interaction with parents and peers as contributors to culture. Survey items 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 are indicators of home culture.
6. Literacy-rich home environment: An environment that is vibrant with proof of literacy is one artifact that has several distinct characteristics (a) print, in the form of books and other literary materials, as well as oral language is evident in the child's home environment, (b) adults in the home model reading as a pleasurable activity as well as a daily function of literacy for the practical purposes of learning from the news, (c) adults use verbal exchange to communicate ideas and feelings with the children, (d) families value children's emergent reading and writing and accept their efforts without

being overly critical of mistakes, (e) families talk with children about print that they see in their environment (Gee, 1999; Holdaway, 1979; Strickland & Taylor, 1989). Survey items 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, and 11 relate to a literacy-rich home environment.

8. Student achievement: Student achievement is identified as a school's academic performance on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* (ITBS). Individual schools' scores are reported as percentile ranks. Survey item 9 indicates student achievement.
9. School performance: School performance is realized via periodic assessments of a school's ability to facilitate learning. A school's report card is based on *No Child Left Behind* which assesses a school's performance using standard achievement tests to provide an indication as to whether the school meets national norms (Louisiana Department of Education, 2004).
10. *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* (*ITBS*): The *ITBS* is a norm-referenced achievement test published by Riverside Publishing. Scores are used to compare student performance on the test with the performance of students nationally. The test measures students' foundational skill performance in reading, mathematics and language arts, social studies and sources of information. Scores are reported as percentile ranks (Louisiana Department of Education, 2004).
11. Facilitation of reading: For this study, facilitation of reading is the enhancement or reinforcement of reading through supportive activities such as encouraging reading and helping with reading and, providing a quiet place in the home for reading and studying.
12. Non-reading activities: For this study, this term encompasses those activities that may not support reading and may include watching television, playing video or

computer games or any other activities which involve no transaction with text.

13. Verbal activities: For this study, this term includes activities where there is play with words, word games, puzzles, oral communication or conversation.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This review of literature on parental and cultural links to student achievement and performance includes a discussion of several factors often addressed in research. The review of literature further includes numerous articles, books, and theoretical articles that discuss parental and cultural links to student achievement. The review first acknowledged research relative to the link between teaching and parenting that championed the notion that what teachers did in the classroom could make a significant difference in student achievement (Brophy & Good, 1986). These links were essential in a child's life when school closed at the end of the day. This section encompasses a discussion of parent involvement and parents' educational levels.

A second focus of this review links overarching cultural characteristics with student achievement and performance that were apparent outside of the classroom but influenced students' academic success as might be measured on standardized assessments (Clark, 1983; Heath, 1983; Steinberg, Brown, & Dombusch, 1996; U. S. Department of Education, 2000). These cultural characteristics of students include,
but are not limited to how parents teach their children to talk, how children learn what is expected of them, and how other children and family members interact (Clark; Heath).

The review also links literacy support in the home environment with student achievement. Aspects of the home culture that make it supportive of literacy include

home learning activities such as help with homework that extend to reading, writing and use of oral language (Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Trelease, 2001). This help is provided via word games, word puzzles, and book sharing through read alouds (Trelease; U.S. Department of Education, 2000). The literature showed there are basic parent involvement indicators and home environmental factors and suggested that when they are employed at the preschool age they can enhance student achievement and performance. Consequently, parent involvement as it related to student achievement was critical to this study.

Linking Parent Involvement to Student Achievement

Significance of Parent Involvement

Although the review of literature revealed the importance of individual learning styles, cultural differences, and teaching strategies, this research focused on the significance of parent involvement. Studies conducted by Wang et al. (1993); Epstein (1995); Goodman, Sutton, and Harkavy (1995); and Steinberg et al. (1996) supported the importance of parental involvement to student performance and achievement. Wang et al. found that students' attitudes about school and their behaviors improved when there was adequate parental involvement. Grant proposals to enhance student achievement, as well as grants awarded to schools for various achievement programs, were contingent upon the effectiveness of the parental involvement component. As practitioners in education came to realize just how crucial parental involvement was to the success of the school and ultimately the success of the individual child, it also became clear how difficult it was to get parents involved in their children's education without an understanding of the obstacles and how to eliminate them (Jesse, 1995). Jesse reported that until educators

arrived at some consensus as to what effective parental involvement was and the barriers that prevent schools from ascertaining the involvement of parents, the quality of parental involvement would not improve. He asserted that parents wanted their children to succeed in effective schools and educators were willing to oblige. Parents, however, did not always know what exactly they should do to ensure that their children were ready for school and ready for learning.

Liontos (1992) listed six beliefs with regard to the substantial involvement of parents and families.

1. Just as all families have weakness, all families have strengths.
2. If taught, parents can learn new techniques.
3. Parents have important viewpoints concerning their children.
4. Regardless to what seems to be true, most parents care about their children.
5. Cultural variance is valid and valuable.
6. Family forms, although quite different from one another, exist and are legitimate. (pp. 30-31)

Types of Parent Involvement

In keeping with beliefs outlined by Liontos (1992), it is important to note distinct ways in which parents could participate meaningfully with their children's schools. Flaxman and Inger (1992) found no argument against the participation of parents in schooling but asked in what were the parents to participate. They asserted that parents could become more effective in their involvement in schools by directly engaging in school management and choice and by being present in the schools. It was by this sort of involvement that schools could improve and address the needs of students. The

effectiveness of the relationship between the parents' involvement and expectation of performance, coupled with the schools' response by becoming more accountable, foster healthy competitiveness among schools (Flaxman & Inger).

A second way that parents could become involved in their child's schooling was by participating in special training programs for parents and by involving themselves in community-sponsored family support programs. Flaxman and Inger (1992) established that conventional parental involvement defined as helping via chaperoning trips and fund raising, had not effectively tapped the potential role of parents as fortifiers and supporters of academic skills at home. Their research also cautioned that parent involvement programs could become barriers within themselves if the goal of the involvement was to force parents to assimilate the norms of the middle-class. This assimilation of middle class norms tended to exacerbate further the barriers between the low-income and minority parents and the schools. This investigator did not focus the current study on the parents' relationships with the schools, but in terms of the current study, it was important to highlight that Flaxman and Inger (1992) helped to define effective indicators of parent involvement which are important to this current study.

Finally, Flaxman and Inger (1992) identified a third basic way in which parents could become more involved as active participants in the schools was by making themselves available to family resource and support programs. These programs address issues and needs of parents, consequently relieving parents of stress that might otherwise adversely affect parenting and the home environment. These family resource and support programs address areas such as job counseling, home visitations, substance abuse, health

clinics, discussion and support groups and referral centers for family social services and also provide conventional before and after school programs.

A study conducted by Lopez (2001) examined parental involvement from the perspective of a migrant household. He asserted the need to examine the definition of parental involvement. Lopez proposed to broaden the understanding of parental involvement in terms of research and practice. He suggested that the education arena had taken a narrow view of parental involvement primarily because educators tend to script specific activities, and activities that did not fit into the mold or occurred at school could not be considered as parental involvement. Lopez was concerned about how schools could attend to the need to have parents more visible in the schools, while schools simultaneously attempt to meet the requirement of accountability.

Lopez (2001) studied parental involvement with a qualitative investigation of five families to gain an in-depth perspective of how they negotiated involvement in their children's education. To develop a holistic understanding of what these families felt were important characteristics of parental involvement, the author used observations and interviews of family members as well as group interviews of family members. The author audio-taped these interviews and later transcribed the interviews after securing consent from the families. A series of interview questions indicated that the sample families felt that showing their children the value of hard work and the struggles encountered when one did not have adequate education was, in essence, a type of parental involvement. These parents communicated the idea that there was a choice of either hard work and struggle or the rewards of a good education.

This literature review addressed the disparity in students' achievement that is often seen along racial lines; however, the current study does not highlight the disparity in terms of race. Instead the current study, focused on parent involvement and cultural aspects of this disparity as asserted by Johnson (1991). He concluded that many low-income families were Black and often were not involved in their children's academic progress. He offered several suggestions. (p. 416)

1. Have regular meetings to discuss homework, behavior, and curriculum;
2. Conduct special parenting skills seminars;
3. Help parents reinforce reading and math skills in children;
4. Teach parents how to help their children with home study;
5. Encourage parent volunteerism;
6. Encourage parents to become educated themselves;
7. Make opportunities for students and parents to learn together;
8. Offer community education classes to get parents to come to the school.

Johnson suggested the involvement of the entire school in its efforts to involve parents in an active, collaborative role by teaching, encouraging, supporting, and helping them.

Finally, Jesse (1995) stated that there was no generic parental involvement concept that worked effectively for all school situations. What was important, however, was that parents communicated the importance of achievement and performance in school by being involved in some way and demonstrating involvement and support in the home. Lopez, Krieder, and Caspe (2005) of the Harvard Family Research Project supported the current literature that declared the importance of family involvement in children's education as crucial to school success. The authors offered a structured

response as to how school-home relationships could be effective in constructing relationships that supported children's learning. Their construct involved what they referred to as a set of dimensions of co-construction that allowed for the active involvement of families, schools, and all other agencies who worked with children. Those dimensions of co-construction as outlined by the authors were (1) responding to family interests and needs where family participants in intervention strategies become committed to reap benefits that would help them to engage in parental involvement that support learning, (2) engaging in dialogue about family experiences that build relationships and trust, (3) building on family funds of knowledge to give value and support to the parenting skills parents already possess, (4) training parents for leadership that teaches parents to analyze and use standardized test data to establish projects and programs that address the needs of their school, and (5) facilitating connections across children's learning contexts to take advantage of the assorted environments outside of school to which children belong and that parents manage. Family involvement programs that followed these five dimensions of co-construction were salient in terms of children's school success (Lopez et al.). The current study focused on indicators of effective parent involvement and the implications these indicators might have on student achievement.

Prior to the Lopez et al.(2005) study, Henderson (1987) emphasized a broad approach relevant to improving the parent/child relationship. The variables focused upon were those familiar in parental involvement research which included level of education of the parent(s); socio- economic status; and family engagement such as family reading, time spent watching television, and emphasis placed on doing homework. The studies

also looked at family patterns such as marital status, socialization, self-esteem, and parent expectation of success (Henderson, 1988).

To examine further types of parent involvement, Steinberg et al. (1996) asserted that parents who were responsive were also warm and accepting toward their own children, fostering a healthy psychological development of the child. Furthermore, Drummond and Stipek (2004) conducted a study in which they interviewed low-income Black, White, and Latino parents to determine how they rated the importance of knowing what their children learn and of helping them in reading, mathematics, and other homework. The researchers chose to study low-income families because children from such families generally performed lower academically than children from other income groups. Because Drummond and Stipek found research that indicated that ethnic differences might be a factor in the way parents determined their beliefs about their role in their children's education, their study addressed it also. Their ethnically diverse sample included more than 200 low-income parents of second- and third-grade children. The researchers examined the parents' perceptions of their children's achievement in reading and mathematics and their perceptions of their involvement in children's achievement. Parents were interviewed using open-ended questions about how they rated the importance of their role in their children's learning in distinct domains. Parents indicated whether they read to their children in the previous week and described what they thought was appropriate help. Parents also described what they believed they should actually do to help their children.

Drummond and Stipek (2004) reported that, regardless of ethnicity, parents felt that being involved in their children's education was important. Their study also revealed

that a difference in one grade level can determine the extent of parental involvement in their children's academic experience. In fact, the researchers found that parents of third graders rated the importance of parent involvement lower than that of parents of second graders, specifically in the area of assisting their children in mathematics. The authors suggested that attempts to involve parents of older children were more critical in mathematics than in reading because their study found that parents rated their role in helping their children in reading as more important than helping them in mathematics. Finally, Drummond and Stipek suggested that schools ask parents about their beliefs about being actively involved in their children's learning and help translate their beliefs into practice.

Although Drummond and Stipek (2004) focused on parental beliefs about their involvement and practices, other research done by Henderson (1987) addressed two other issues: home environment and its effects on preschoolers and changes in preschoolers when there was parental involvement in school and at home. Henderson's findings indicated that children were placed at risk if they did not feel positive about themselves and their environments. Henderson (1988) also concluded that these attitudes, whether positive or negative, were learned in the child's home environment and were impacted by both family and community interaction. Henderson posited that children of parents who were in touch with the school scored higher on aptitude tests than those whose parents were not involved. She further suggested that children whose parents helped them to learn and to nurture attitudes of achievement performed better academically than the children of parents who did not nurture learning in their children. The results of parental involvement were long term. Students who were failing made a turnaround when there

was some positive parental involvement. Henderson found that low-income and minority graduates of preschool whose parents were highly involved in their learning outperformed other students when they entered high school. As a final point, she concluded that student achievement was augmented by the interest that parents show in their children's academic performance and their expectation of their children's success. The focus was to introduce parental involvement in the school. Henderson's research indicated that the language skills performance on tests and behaviors at school of children from low-income families improved when parents were trained to help their children. The importance of collaboration among teachers, students and parents was further defined by Cameron and Lee (1997) in the following five statements:

1. Extensive parent involvement fosters higher student achievement.
2. Student grades, test scores, attendance, and homework completion are positively influenced.
3. Student attitudes about their school experience and behaviors are positive.
4. Higher expectations are solicited from students whose parents are collaborating with teachers.
5. Student alcohol use and violent behaviors are decreased with parental involvement.

Another significant improvement noted by Henderson (1987) was that children's attitudes improved when their parents were trained to help them. The final broad approach to parental involvement and student achievement taken by the researcher was to look at building collaboration between home and school. In her final approach, Henderson wanted to see what correlation with student achievement would emerge when

there were effective community relations. The researcher began this task by inquiring whether schools with proven academic success had any more or any less community involvement than other schools. What she concluded, overwhelmingly, was that schools with high academic achievement had higher levels of parental involvement than did schools with low levels of parental involvement. Henderson further concluded that the school's efforts to improve achievement levels were dependent upon its efforts to involve parents. Although the Henderson study was diverse in scope, subject content, and methodology, the findings were conclusive in terms of the importance of parental involvement at home and at school.

Mahoney (1999) defined parent involvement as it related to schools' efforts to involve parents:

> The definition of parent education should include the expectation that parents will acquire knowledge and skills that allow them to mediate or extend intervention with their child. Typical goals of parent education should include teaching parents strategies to assert children in attaining development skills..., and enhance parents' skills in engaging their children in play and social interaction. (p. 1)

Mahoney found that some parents lacked skills appropriate for guiding their children toward making better choices with respect to academic achievement. He called for parent education whereby parents would be taught strategies to assist their children in ways that would ultimately affect their academic performance.

To substantiate further the impact of parent involvement on early childhood development, Willis, Stephens and Mathews (1996) felt that a redefining of parental

involvement with the notion of parent engagement was tantamount to understanding the impact that parents could have on their children's achievement in school. The idea here was that parents became directly engaged in the education of their children which suggested a home culture or literacy-rich environment in which parents read to the child as well as with the child. Engagement meant creating quiet space and time for the child to do his or her homework, employing tutors if necessary, or providing for home-based reinforcement (Hawley & Rosenholtz, 1984).

The review of literature contained here suggested that there are building blocks to student achievement in relationship with home culture or a literacy environment relative to whether television is monitored, whether literature is present in the home, and whether literacy is facilitated by the parents (Trelease, 2001). The home culture was reported to be supportive of literacy when (a) there was reading aloud and shared reading, (b) there was a variety of literature in the home or there were library or bookstore visits, (c) television viewing was regularly monitored, (d) there was a designated place in the home where the child could study or prepare homework, (e) oral language use and word play were modeled, and (f) there were opportunities where the parents engaged the child in conversation about his or her school day and about the child's reading. Research by Morrow, O'Connor, and Smith (1990) revealed that as preschool children heard a story read to them by someone in their environment, they made connections that the written word conveyed meaning just as the spoken word conveyed meaning.

Aulls and Sollars (2003) also examined the impact of home environment on the emerging reading ability of students entering the first grade. The main purpose of their study was to establish various ways in which children's literacy ability or development

differed from how parents perceived the home literacy environment. Their sample was taken from children who were entering first grade at four Canadian schools. Parents' perceptions of the home literacy environment were collected using their responses to a 34-item survey. Questions on the survey addressed parents' perceptions of the type of textual materials in their home and their use of print-involved activities. As a result of a post hoc analysis of the data acquired from the survey, Aulls and Sollars indicated that in *average* home environments 10% of parents bought newspapers daily and 20% bought magazines on a regular basis. The researchers defined a home literacy continuum of *rich-rich, rich-moderate, moderate-rich* or *moderate-moderate* to indicate the accessibility of print in the home, the prospect that a child could interact with text, and the probability that the child could actively interact or passively interact with text. In *rich-rich* home environments, 55% of parents indicated that newspapers were present in the home, and 64% indicated that magazines were bought on a regular basis. These percentages maintained the same pattern when parents reported how many children's books were owned, whether there were subscriptions to children' magazines, whether books were bought and whether parents owned alphabet books.

Aulls and Sollars (2003) asserted that, with respect to reading activities between parent and child, 50% of parents in *moderate-moderate* home environments regarded reading as a leisure activity compared to 86% in *rich-rich* home environments. The authors also found that in *rich-rich* home environments a greater percentage (54%) of parents stated that they engaged their children in reading every day, compared to parents of average households who stated that they engaged their children in reading no more than twice a week. Aulls and Sollars indicated that when there were varied occasions

during which children were exposed and actively engaged in literacy activities, there was a measurable influence on responsiveness to text and what the authors called *code knowledge*. They further found that the quality of a home environment that supported literacy influenced children's responsiveness to text and code knowledge.

Rashid, Morris, and Seveik (2005) investigated the quality of home literacy environment of children who were experiencing reading disabilities with respect to the variety and availability of literacy opportunities. From 5 elementary schools, they sampled 65 first and second grade students with reading disabilities and their parents or caregivers. The sample of children and their parents included White and Black children from middle and low income levels. The students were given several reading tests to determine reading ability. Parents were requested to respond to a comprehensive telephone questionnaire that posed questions relative to demographics, their child's development, and literacy environment. The researchers performed an exploratory factor analysis for the sample of 65 children to determine the effective design of the questionnaire. Data from the parent questionnaire revealed that there was variety in literacy experiences. The data also showed that, although some home environments provided several opportunities for children to engage in literacy activities and access to reading material, the children did not necessarily participate in reading activity. Finally, Rashid et al.'s research disclosed two critical points: (a) the quality of home literacy environment activities influenced the variance of comprehension in children's reading and spelling scores and (b) for children with reading disabilities, the relationship of home literacy and the child's reading achievement was not as significant.

Modeling Literacy

Lonigan (1999) studied Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder behaviors and literacy skills in a sample of 96 preschool children of which there were 44 from middle-income families and 41 from low-income families attending Head Start. The purpose of his study was to examine the relation of middle- and low-income preschool age children with respect to problem behaviors, socialization and literacy skills. His findings indicated that children who exhibited attention deficits were from the middle-income group. Lonigan suggested that a strong determinant of students' academic successes was grounded in their early reading skills. In fact, entering school with limited reading ability put those students at risk of being placed in special services. Lonigan suggested that modeling reading in the home by parents contributed to eliminating that risk.

Lonigan (1999) reported that children in low-income families scored lower on measures of literacy skills (i.e., oral language, letter knowledge, word decoding, and reading comprehension) than those of middle-income groups. The Lonigan (1999) study did not clearly show that behavioral deficits were indicative of deficits in the literacy of low-income children. The author did not find a significant correlation of a child's "social competence and literacy skills" (p. 20). The author advised that children from low-income families should be identified for early intervention to avoid future reading problems. To do this, he suggested using strategies that were engaging and focused on literacy skills. Bridging the gap between what was done by the school and what the parents did at home was crucial. As early intervention programs were prescribed to help preschoolers who were at risk of being misplaced in special education programs, both the parents and educators were needed to collaborate and implement a plan of action that

could best impact the child's needs. Family involvement issues that influenced the level of parent involvement and implementation of action plans to address students' needs with respect to activities and expectations were critical to the success of early intervention programs.

Family Involvement Issues

According to the National Center on Fathering (2000), family involvement was defined as follows:

1. Back-to-school and general school meetings were the most common ways to be involved. Usually in two-parent homes, the responsibility to be involved in activities was divided between father and mother.
2. Parents who were involved in school were also involved at home and shared other activities that might or might not be related to school.
3. Highly involved parents had expectations of graduation from high school and a four-year college.
4. Highly involved parents belonged to community, professional, and religious organizations and exposed their children to these organizations regularly.
5. The degree of involvement in children's education decreased as the size of the school increased.

Lonigan's (1999) task to identify families of disadvantaged children and to apply early interventions aligned with the National Household Education Survey of 1996 could circumvent the failure of family involvement in the schools. What were some factors that cause family involvement to falter? Action research performed by Blackfelner and Ranallo (1998) indicated that parental involvement faltered when parents (a) feared

school, (b) lacked time, (c) lacked transportation, and (d) felt embarrassment about their own educational levels. This faltering of parental involvement was most evident between elementary and middle school (Henderson, 1998). Some parents usually tended to decrease their involvement in their children's education because usually there was a change in schools, the schools were sometimes farther away from home, and the schools were bigger and had more teachers with whom there must be interaction. Finally, there was some pressure to relinquish some responsibility so the child could become more independent. Henderson warned that the academic community made a grave mistake when it attempted to correct family issues with programs that were perceived as intrusive because such programs sent the wrong signals to families and caused them to stay away. Parents were moved to be more involved in a school that respected and supported them.

King (1994) further affirmed the critical importance of family involvement in education, specifically speaking to the idea that students' success in school depended on their social development, cognitive experiences, and attitudes toward learning which they encountered first in their families. The writer concluded that family characteristics and home experiences also determined a student's predisposition to learning and success. According to Maccoby (1992), when families did not provide opportunities to increase children's readiness for learning, then those children were placed on the path for failure. When children saw that learning was important in the family, they were placed on the path for success. For example, if the parents read and wrote, then reading and writing become a part of the child's existence in the family, also. Although parental involvement meant, generally, the involvement of only the mother, Ortiz (1996) concluded that fathers who shared in the rearing of their children were most likely to read to their children.

Nord (1998) cited obvious advantages to having both parents involved in a child's education: (a) the student's grades were above average; (b) the families were those who visited libraries, book stores, museums, and other cultural activities; and (c) the father's involvement fostered a building of mental skills in children and more effectively defined healthy gender roles in families. The emphasis placed in the Nord study was that either the mother or the father needed to be highly involved in the child's education in order to bring about effective change in a child's achievement level. Neither this current investigation nor the studies cited here diminished the importance of the mother's involvement in the child's academic achievement. A greater instance of success was guaranteed, however, when both parents demonstrated an interest in the child's school activities and learning. Parent involvement, as this current investigation outlined, nevertheless, was not limited to what parents did at school but included the kinds of home experiences the child encountered as well. Steinberg et al. (1996) proposed that parents extended a connection between what their children learned and did at school with what they did at home.

Parental Level of Education

One way to extend a connection between what children learn at school to home was shared reading (Nettles & Perna, 1977; Steinberg et al. 1996; Trelease 2001). This notion of shared reading or joint reading and the way parents interacted with their children during these joint reading sessions were well documented in several research studies such as those by Heath (1983) and Anderson-Yockel and Haynes (1994). These researchers described the relationship of the parents' level of education, their socio-economic status, and their cultural associations as influential factors in the quality of joint

reading. Zill, Collins, West, and Hausken, (1995), in their review of the research, revealed that low socio-economic level was not the main factor that determined literacy performance of children, but that family structure, maternal level of education, and language were the greatest determinants of literacy development among young children. Clearly, economic status might influence the quality of books or lack of books in the home to be used for shared reading activities. The overarching question was, then, whether these factors hindered parents from sharing literacy with their children altogether. Zill et al.(1995) pointed to some distinct family dynamics that tended to predict whether children would have problems processing learning at the start of school: (a) a single parent home where the child was born to an unwed mother, (b) the family existed below the poverty line, (c) English was not the primary language in the home, and (d) the mother's education was limited to grade school.

Zill et al. (1995) indicated that the mother's lack of adequate education and language status were the greatest determiners of preschoolers demonstrating fewer signs of early literacy and experiencing difficulties in school later. Their study indicated the importance of having some sort of interventions in the school or the home to accommodate the needs of children from the aforementioned environmental circumstances. Other research reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (2001) indicated the following:

1. Sixty-one percent of children of parents with less than a high school education were read to three or more times within the week in contrast to 90% of children whose parents who had a college degree or professional school credentials.

2. The mother's education was one determinant of whether the child would read everyday.
3. Seventy-one percent of children whose mothers were college graduates were read aloud to every day compared only 39% of children whose mothers had not completed high school.
4. White children had a 61% chance of being read aloud to on a daily basis compared to 41% of Black children.

These data supported the notion that parents' lower level of education would diminish their children's academic achievement because parents with lower levels of education were not equipped to be role models for literacy and academic progression. Some parents were getting the message in 1996 when there was an 80% increase of instances of parents reading to their 3-5 years olds and 39% had visited a library within the previous month (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999). In 1996, however, White children from this same age group were more likely than Black children to have been read to, to have been told a story, or to have visited a library. In 2004, however, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that the score disparity in reading between Black and White students at age 9 decreased between 1971 and 2004 by eighteen points. In addition, by age 17 the score disparity in reading decreased by 24 points by 2004.

Linking Black and White Cultural Overarching Characteristics to Student Achievement

Nettles and Perna (1997) emphasized cultural characteristics that might influence student achievement of Black students. Their research was important to this current study because their research highlighted some cultural characteristics in addition to how parents

might influence student achievement. Nettles and Perna (1997) focused on children 3-5 years of age and those aspects that one might have expected to affect the school performance of Black children. Specific areas included economic status, health, performance on standardized tests, school attendance, and readiness for school. The questions as to how well Black preschoolers were prepared to enter elementary school and how their lives and educational experiences compared to their peers of other racial and ethnic groups were addressed. As a catalyst for their study, Nettles and Perna referred to the adoption of the National Education Goals by President George W. Bush and 50 governors at the National Education Summit of 1989. The primary focus was Goal One that stated that all of America's children would start school ready to learn by year the 2000. Salinger (1996) defined school readiness as readiness for reading. To be ready for school, preschoolers would have to be at the point where they had gained experiences, skills, and cognitive abilities that they would need to succeed in school and be ready to read. Salinger further suggested that preschoolers possessed the capability "to take command of much of their own literacy learning because they want to understand and use varied forms of communication" (p. 13).

Nettles and Perna's (1997) perspective differed from that of Salinger (1996); they focused more on the social circumstances in which some children were born. They cited low birth weight and single mothers heading homes receiving government assistance as a less than adequate beginning for children. Interestingly, their findings indicated that a greater percentage of three and four-year old Black children attended some type of preschool program than did White children. This percentage, however, was not common for all Black students. The authors cautioned those interested in such research not to

become overly comfortable with these findings because data on the quality of the curriculum, personnel, and academic emphasis were not mentioned and suggested that examining these components was essential in explaining the disparity in Black and White students' performance. It was on performance assessments that disparities among the races began to manifest themselves. Nettles and Perna concluded that these differences in performance were not evident in social and motor development; however, Black female students seemed to perform better than did Black male students on motor and social development and verbal memory tests.

Nettles and Perna (1997) further reported differences in parental activities relative to school readiness for three and four-year olds. The criteria for assessment of school readiness included attitudes, behaviors and academic skills with a specific focus on parental involvement in telling stories, attending religious events, and visiting zoos, aquariums, libraries, galleries, and museums. The researchers indicated that 76.6% of parents told stories to their three to four-year olds and 86.3% indicated that they taught their children letters and words. Data also showed, however, that 63.9% of Black parents taught their children letters and words and that 72.2% told their children stories and songs. A miniscule percentage (17.1%) of both Black and White parents took their children to zoos or aquariums. Only 37.8 % took them to a library, and 22.9% of Black parents and 18.2% of White parents took their children to a gallery or museum. Nettles and Perna further found that, of the entire percentage of preschoolers (37.8%) who visited a library, only 28.9% of Black preschoolers had done so. In parents' assessment of their children's reading level, Black families stated that their children read books on their own. Yet, five-year-old Black children did not own as many books as did five-year-old White

children. In fact, only 12.9% of Blacks owned 50 or more books in contrast to 46.6% of Whites.

Cultural Contrasts

The evidence was that there were some differences in the daily routines of students coming from homes that lacked resources and activities that supported literacy and future academic performance. A relevant theme in the literature also addressed whether a student's academic performance could be determined by the cultural circumstances in his or her home. Clark (1983) conducted a study of 10 Black students from homes in a low socio-economic community. In his sample, five were succeeding academically, and five were not. Clark, along with Dave (1963) and Wolf (1964), asserted that academically successful students came from homes where parents had significantly different interactive styles that were supportive of high achievement than parents of academically unsuccessful students. This emotional support was most profound when the child encountered failure (Finn, 1998). Wang et al. (1993) concluded that what was most critical to a child's learning was not parents' engagement at school but in the home.

Clark (1983) used a sample of 1,141 third graders who were either high or low achieving from 71 elementary schools in Los Angeles. Parental data gathered through questionnaires were analyzed, and conclusions were that the parents of high achieving students set standards that were higher than the standards of parents of low achieving students. The author contended that much research had been done that focused on demographic characteristics such as divorced parents, working mothers, young mothers, households functioning on limited incomes, poorly educated mothers, race or ethnicity,

and residency in depressed urban neighborhoods. Clark suggested that although these socio-demographic characteristics provided a view of influences on the likelihood that a child would perform at his or her optimal level, they also provided a glimpse of the overarching home culture of the child. The author's focus was more toward the communicative styles of the parents which he described as authoritative or authoritarian. He defined the authoritative approach as one of *sponsored independence* characterized by parental involvement, monitoring of the child's space and time, involvement in the child's academics, communication of expectations, explanations of everyday events, regular feedback and praise, and discipline. This home culture was characteristic of children who demonstrated high performance.

In the *non-sponsored independence* style of parental communication, parents took an authoritarian role characterized mainly by permissiveness and inconsistency in home activities and infrequency in literacy activities. The authoritarian role was further characterized by limited parental monitoring, guidance, support, advisement, and demonstration of ideas to the child (Clark, 1983). In addition, the author noted that authoritarian parents regularly communicated to the child criticism and dissatisfaction with his or her worth and abilities. This type of home culture was characteristic of children who were low achievers.

In a study in the same year as Clark's (1983), Heath (1983) conducted an ethnographic study of Black and White families in two working class, textile mill towns in the Carolina Piedmont region. She investigated language and cultural differences that influenced the lives of people in the two physically close towns. The author's research question was "What were the effects of the preschool home and community environment

on the learning of those language structures and uses which were needed in classrooms and job settings?" (p. 4). Heath spent time in homes and workplaces of the people of both communities, attended church, and made classroom visits. She also participated actively in the academic arena to help design and implement curricular activities that would ultimately influence the lives of preschool children. Heath found that regardless of race, the different communities used various means to communicate because their individual communities had "different social legacies and ways of behaving in face-to-face interactions" (p. 11).

Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo, and Coll (2001) studied child development within the context of cultural differences in the home environment. They suggested that a better understanding of the relation between a child's home environment and his or her development could be discovered when the child's connections and experiences to his environment were known. The central purpose of Bradley et al.'s study was to describe the regularity in which children encountered common factors used to define home environments. This purpose dictated that they consider the issue of ethnicity and socio-economic status as effects on home environment. Their sample included 4,944 women between the ages of 14 and 21. They collected child data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth for the years of 1986 to 1994. Data were also collected using a parent questionnaire. Among several categories that included parent responsiveness, physical environment, learning stimulation, and spanking, the questionnaire required specific responses to the following home environment indicators: (a) how often they encouraged the child to contribute to conversation, (b) whether they answered the child's questions or requests verbally, (c) whether the family received a daily newspaper, (d) how many

books the child had, and (e) how often the parent read stories to the child. Bradley et al. asserted that the kinds and quality of children's experiences in their homes would vary and be determined by economic levels. Children from homes of economic hardship would have few opportunities to access tangible goods and services and fewer enabling academic experiences, and they would encounter more instances of incapacitating situations and circumstances that would ultimately hinder their proper academic development.

Dodici et al. (2003) conducted a study that did not focus on limited opportunities, tangible goods or lack of resources; rather, they posited that early parent-child interactions play a decisive role in a child's early literacy development. They looked at parents' emotional tone, engagement, parental talk, and guidance. They examined the relationship of early parent-child interactions and early literacy skills. One specific research question addressed by the researchers that related to this current investigation asked what the relationship was between parent-child interactions and early literacy skills of children from low-income homes. Participants included 27 families whose children were born between September 1995 and September 1996. The families met other criteria such as eligibility for Early Head Start services, and the researchers used video tape to record parent-child interactions that consisted of three structured sessions of teaching, play, and frustration behaviors. Parents were requested to complete a questionnaire that consisted of 52 questions pertaining to reading interests of their children as well as their own reading habits. The questionnaire also solicited responses about literacy in the home environment. The researchers found that the quality of parent-child interactions at an

early age was related to early literacy. Their finding was particularly significant for low-income families.

Oral Interaction

Black children "learning" to talk. Research conducted by Dodici et al. (2003) was important when parents' use of oral language and how its use could facilitate language development in children were considered. Strickland and Shanahan (2004) suggested that the more opportunities that children have "to use language in interactions with adults and with one another, both one-on-one and in small groups, engage in extended conversations with adults, or listen and respond to stories read and told to them," the more their oral language development was enhanced (p. 76).

To illustrate the importance of oral language, Heath (1983) described a setting in a particular Black family when a new baby was born. In the particular Black culture that Heath studied, the father was expected to supply diapers, milk, etc, as well as arrange to visit. Young mothers who usually were not prepared materially for the birth of a baby expected to receive material items for the baby from the father. Babies of mature mothers were brought home to both mother and father. Older children were given the responsibility of the new baby who received attention constantly by other family members who might often sleep with the baby. Babies were thought of as something to play with and admire. They were never left alone. Often there was no structure for feeding and sleeping. Conversation was about the baby but often not directed to the baby. The child was held in a position, often on the hip of a family member or cradled in the arm, so that he or she could view the faces of others. Any attempts to associate a sound with an object were considered noise. Adults did not consider a baby able to speak words

at this stage in his or her life. In fact, Heath reported that praise was given for the baby's non-verbal responses. A Black child at this stage was a *lap sitter*, and for the first few years had no opportunities to sit alone and play with toys. The child was not addressed directly, but terms such as *the baby*, *young'un*, or *chap* were used instead. Family names were rarely chosen; instead, names were chosen from television shows or movies. Nicknames were given because of prominent physical characteristics.

With her research, Heath (1983) surmised that as the child grew older, common methods of communication used in the family were expected. For instance, little boys were expected to learn to engage in discussions and to sense the appropriate occasions to join in discussion by gauging the reaction of the audience. Children learned to perform (tease, defy, boss, baby and scold) and were ready to exhibit the appropriate behavior consistent with the current situation or circumstances. There was always a rapid comeback or retort when a personal comment was made. Adults did not see children as partners for regular conversation; consequently, children were expected to be knowers of information to be used in their environment. Reading to young children was rare, and when reading was done, the story was embellished and done in a singsong rhythm. Children were not questioned about their knowledge of the world, nor were they asked *why* questions. Emphasis in the Black family was placed on the ability to switch roles and adapt to the audiences in the context of the games such as exchange of insults. Words embodied actions and symbolized what one was able to be and ways one was able to perform. Consequently, in the Black family, a definition of a word meant less than the action it evoked or the feeling the word evoked when spoken. The following quotation

from one of the residents in the Black community studied by Heath aptly communicated the concept: "Whatcha call it ain't important as what you do with it" (p. 112).

White children "taught" to talk. In contrast to the homecoming of a baby in a Black family, Heath (1983) revealed that those born to White families were celebrated in events that showed high regard for the women: baby showers. It was at this time that gifts, such as rattlers, mobiles for the crib, stuffed animals, and books were given for the baby as well as for the mother. The shower became a social event where the name of the baby was contemplated. The community contributed cribs, rockers, and various other furnishings for the baby's area. Usually, the child's environment was complete with a playpen, high chair, stroller, bassinet, infant seat and car seat. His or her first year was spent in a world of color variety, sounds, manipulatives, and literary stimuli. With these kinds of items in his or her environment, the child was encouraged and expected to explore and interact with his or her world. Unlike the dictates of the Black culture, the baby was soon placed on a regular sleeping and feeding schedule so that the mother might return to work.

Heath (1983) also concluded that as the White child grew older, communication was face-to- face, and baby noises or responses to items were encouraged and reinforced. It was at this time that the child was encouraged to play with the language, with adults contributing only when language was inappropriate. Adults expanded on the language used by their preschoolers. In the White family, children learned to express their needs and to be partners in communication. To foster good communication, parents talked to their preschoolers about how to talk about and learn about their world. In contrast to Black families where children were information receivers, children of White families

were expected to be givers and receivers of information. White children were encouraged to ask questions because questions would be asked of them; consequently, *why* questions were common in conversation. Parents felt that asking many questions was evidence of an inquisitive mind.

Toys were gender selected and were selected based on a book theme, such as those from the Harry Potter series. Fathers were involved in playing routines with the children, which allow opportunity for family time and learning time. Knowledge was nurtured by requiring children to repeat names and concepts, and children were taught to respect authority of adults and be able to express regret for a wrong done against another. One parent expressed this idea: "We talk to them kids all the time, like they was grownup or something 'n we buy those educational toys for'em" (Heath, 1983 p. 128).

Linking Literacy Activities to Support Student Achievement

Not to contradict the importance of parent and child oral interactions, Cotton and Wikelund (1989) identified the most effective parental involvement as occurring when the parent was actively involved with the child in learning activities at home. In fact, the authors proposed that the literature also showed that it was this active involvement in home learning activities as opposed to passive involvement that made the difference in the child's achievement. The question investigated by Cotton and Wikelund related to the importance of parents communicating with the school, returning telephone messages from the school, signing pertinent papers and attending parent teacher conferences as necessary for student performance and achievement. Cotton and Wikelund, however, pointed out that it was what the parents did at home with their children, how they supported the school and how they helped in extracurricular activities, that most

benefited their child's achievement. Proponents for early childhood intervention, the authors stated that their review of research showed that when parents were involved in a child's learning early in the educational process, the benefits to the child were long term. Literacy activities that might have occurred at home might be manifested in the form of play time.

Playtime Activities

Another important aspect of early child development that augmented learning was opportunity to play, whether through imaginative play or creative play. Matterson (1965) asserted that playtime offered a preschooler the means to work out emotions, provided a repertoire for working out situations, and offered solutions to problems that small children had. Playtime alleviated reliance upon words to communicate at the level that the preschooler would understand. The author believed that adequate time effectively managed by the mother gave the child opportunity to finish one play activity before moving on to another. Matterson further asserted that the child during these activities, regardless of the difficulty level of the activity, should be taken as "seriously as the child takes himself" (p. 43). The author moreover proposed that playtime was a time to work off emotion that would otherwise be released in aggression toward others. In addition, Matterson placed significant importance on the idea of a child having a private place in which to engage in play. Children lived in a world where normal adult furniture was physically intimidating and challenging, thus children often found small nooks in kitchens or other family areas for their private spaces (Matterson, 1965).

Smith (1998) presented a theoretical framework relative to the importance of parents engaging in play activities or play training methods with their children and the

positive impact this play had on child development. He defined play training as a strategy that required that parents engage in purposeful play with preschoolers. Smith focused on why play training worked. Besides social and cognitive development, the author noted that play was important for language development. He listed four distinguishing elements that were common with parents using play training. These activities represented the most common approaches that he discovered in his research. These activities included (a) adults engaging in the play activities for a period; (b) adults engaging in the children's make-believe activities as characters but not instructing the children; (c) adults asking questions, advising, and modeling to enhance the play activity for a pre-determined reason; and (d) adults withdrawing from the play activity after a period of time to encourage independent interaction.

Opportunities to Support Literacy

The effectiveness of parents' use of playtime activities to support literacy was determined by their opportunity to implement such activities. According to Salinger (1996), opportunity to support literacy was also determined by whether a rich environment for literacy was provided. He called this emerging literacy in a child's environment a "ripening function" (p. 14). He found that it was during this time that children develop readiness. Their literacy skills were emerging from their surroundings, and parents could provide the right surroundings for emerging literacy and future success in school. Hockenberger (1999) emphasized how pertinent it was that parents desisted from thinking of reading as the end product. He further stated that the focus of reading should be on what has been learned, which ultimately allows children to achieve literacy.

Teale and Sulzby (1986) suggested four pertinent tenets of early literacy: (a) a child's development in literacy began before he or she entered formal instruction in a classroom; (b) it was through a child's environmental experiences that he or she learned to read and write; (c) the literacy skills that a child learned became the essential component to his or her process of learning, and (d) all literacy components and language communication components of reading, writing, listening, and speaking were interrelated in young children. Daniel, Clarke, and Ouellette (2001), along with a panel of literacy experts, released a book and a program of standards based on the research that showed that literacy was based on speaking and listening abilities of varying ages. *NEA Today* ("Parent Involvement," 1998) reported that preschoolers learned and became literate as a result of speaking and listening; consequently, literacy could be defined as one's ability to engage in the narration, explanation and solicitation of information.

This resurgence of emphasis on emergent literacy seemed to be gaining momentum across the nation as a result of the lackluster reading performance of the nation's children in the 1990s (Sulzby & Teale, 1991). In fact, the persistent gap in reading achievement between children in low socio-economic environments and of children from upper socioeconomic environments contributed to fueling this fervent interest (Singham, 2003). In addition, Manzo (2001) reported that by 2000, 63% of Black fourth-graders were reading below the basic level, but only 27% of White fourth-graders were reading below basic levels.

Adams (1990) identified what she classified as predictors of children's success in learning to read: the preschooler's (a) ability to recognize and name letters of the alphabet, (b) general knowledge about text (i.e., front and back of the book, uses of

pictures or print to tell a story, direction to turn pages in a book), and (c) awareness of phonemes or sounds that correspond to individual letters. Additionally, Coe (2001) suggested that children were better able to identify words as their exposure to phonemic features of words increased.

Investigating literacy from a different perspective than that of Adams (1990), Morrow and Young (1997) evaluated the correlation between home and school literacy as parents employed literacy activities and experiences with their children. Morrow and Young randomly sampled 54 first, second, and third graders who engaged in either school-based literacy activities with a teacher or home-based literacy activities with a parent that mirrored those found in regular school classrooms. Results from pretest and posttest of achievement and motivation revealed that participants did better in terms of achievement and motivation when school and home literacy activities were combined. Teale and Sulzby (1986) described characteristic circumstances in which emergent literacy was developed in young learners as determined by (a) whether children were read to and engaged in writing activities and (b) whether children were living in a language and print-rich environment.

Shared Reading and Reading Aloud

Literacy as described by Teale and Sulzby (1986) also included the language students hear. Strickland and Taylor (1989) suggested that children from a literacy rich environment where books were read to them exhibited an academic advantage because it gave opportunity for the children to interact with the parents using words and pictures. Trelease (2001) stated that making sure that a child "hears words in meaningful sentences and questions had nothing to do with how much a parent loved a child" (p. 14). What was

critical in this statement was that sentences a child heard should come from the parent and not from artificial means such as television or computers.

When consideration was given to the pertinence of early literacy in terms of the home environment, attention focused on tangible activities or materials that fostered future reading readiness, language development, and ultimately student achievement. McConell and Rabe (1999) put forward for consideration the concept of studying children's interactions with their parents, children's access to books, and how the connection between the two developed literacy. A home environment where there was shared book reading (Heath, 1983; McConnell & Rabe), an overt demonstration of interest in printed materials, and attitudes that symbolized the importance and enjoyment of reading were significant to the child's eventually becoming literate. One of the ways that parents could overtly demonstrate interest in reading was by conducting oral reading sessions with their children (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985).

This interaction with parents via the written word and spoken language with the child following along promoted an appreciation of the joy of reading, according to Sulzby and Teale (1991). The authors suggested that parents taking their children to libraries and verbally interacting with them to hone their language usage skills ultimately enhanced their ability to perform in settings where they used literacy skills. Asking children questions, giving feedback to their comments, and encouraging them with play using language, word games and songs were ways parents could build their children's literacy skills (Anderson et al., 1985). When both parents were actively involved in the process of encouraging the formation of literacy skills, children saw that literacy was important in the family.

McConell and Rabe (1999) concluded that parents could do much to assure early literacy in their children by talking with them about books in shared discussions. Bennett (1999) proposed that preschoolers' abilities to process written material were determined by whether parents read to them as infants. The view assumed that early literacy required having books in the home and further required visiting public libraries as children got older so that they were exposed to print material throughout their early years of schooling. The more that children were exposed to and expected to respond to print materials, the more adept they were at processing information from print (Koppenhaver, Coleman, Kalman, & Yoder, 1991).

In fact, Koppenhaver et al. (1991) asserted that not only was shared reading important to future academic performance but also families who taught their children numbers, letters, and words three or more times weekly or visited the library enhanced their children's emerging literacy. In addition, Trelease (2001) emphasized the effectiveness of reading aloud to children. He asserted that reading aloud to children was significant because the act of reading aloud (a) conditioned the child's brain to associate reading with pleasure, (b) created background knowledge, (c) built vocabulary, and (d) provided a reading role model.

Trelease (2001) addressed the prominence of a permanent fixture of a television in American homes and children's exposure to words heard on television in contrast to words heard in stories. He pinpointed several glaring differences between reading and viewing television: (a) television viewing was the opposite of reading in that it required and taught children to have a short attention span, whereas children's books required a longer attention span; (b) for children, television was an antisocial experience, but

reading was a social experience because reading allowed for discussion and questions about what was read; and (c) because the television was not interactive, children could not ask questions about the story or get feedback. Further, he noted that television (a) prevented conversation with family members, (b) was deceptive to young minds because it gave the impression that problems could be instantly resolved, and (c) used lower vocabulary than did children's books, newspapers, and magazines.

Clarke and Costes (1997) investigated the relationship between children who watch television and school readiness. They interviewed 30 preschool children from low-income families. They collected data from parents about the number of hours their children watched television, the home environment, and job status. Intelligence quotient scores were ascertained from the children's school records. Clarke and Costes found that the parents' intervention in the number of hours children watched television was the key to its negative or positive impact on school readiness. In addition, the researchers found that the quantity of books in a child's environment did not ensure school readiness if the books were not read.

Poretta and Borden (1997) disagreed with the view that television should be blamed for the lack of family interaction as Trelease (2001) reported. They argued that television in moderation could be used as tool for learning. Further, Poretta and Borden stated that television could be a source of language for a child viewer; a source of exposure to other cultures and values; a resource for learning issues in history, current events, drama and art; and a springboard for a family discussion of values. It should be noted, however, that work by Trelease examining the importance of children's exposure to words from reading and reading that was done in the home seemed to suggest the

importance to the child's future appreciation of reading rather than dependence on oral and visual images that were presented in a television program.

Related to children's early exposure to television, recent cross-sectional research by Christakis, Zimmerman, DiGiuseppe, and McCarty (2004) asserted that television watching by infants could account for diminished attention spans. Their hypothesis was that "early television exposure (at ages one and three) was associated with attentional problems at age seven" (p. 708). These researchers further postulated that due to the rapid stimuli that television provided in contrast to real life, developing brains of infants might become over stimulated. Results from their study indicated that early exposure to television was associated with attention issues later in the child's life. These attention issues became evident particularly in deficits in reading performance in subsequent age levels (Koostra & Van der Voort, 1996).

Further, the more hours that were spent watching television, the fewer hours remained for reading, particularly reading and interacting with one's child. Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein, and Serpell (2001) investigated interchanges between first grade children and their mothers during shared storybook reading to assess the impact on both short- and long-term reading achievement. Their study showed that conversation relative to the illustrations was most pertinent and yielded positive results in proportion with the mother's education. This longitudinal study of children's literacy development included a sample of 61 children and their mothers from low-income and middle-income Black and White families. The study required observations and recording of mothers sharing a storybook with their children. At random intervals during the children's first year of school, parents were interviewed about literacy activities in which the child was involved.

To measure the students' achievements in the first and third year, they were given the Word Identification and Word Attack test from the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement B Revised (Baker et al., 2001). Baker et al. concluded that parents from the low socio-economic circumstances might find it an arduous task to utilize shared reading as an effective tool for modeling literacy due in part to the parents' lack of literacy experiences. The researchers asserted that their sample was too small to determine a correlation of storybook reading to reading achievement; however, their study did provide momentum to investigate such a correlation.

Finally, Trelease (2001) had this to say with respect to the home environment in which the parents facilitated an interest in reading.

> The people in the child's home stimulate the child's interest in reading and writing by answering endless questions, praising the child's efforts at reading and writing, taking the child to the library frequently, buying books, writing stories that the child dictates, and displaying his paperwork in a prominent place in the home. (p. 42)

Trelease suggested that what was modeled in the home by the child's principal caregivers would make an impact on what the child saw as important. If the child saw the support of and enjoyment of literacy activities in the home, whether those activities were oral or written, his or her interest in reading was stimulated.

Occupational Support of Literacy

The view that parents should be actively engaged with literacy activities presupposed that they would be available for this meaningful time with their children. Because many parents work, they must find the time between work and keeping their

home to be involved in their children's lives (Heymann & Earle 2000). Often, for low-income families, finding time was difficult because of occupational restraints and job inflexibility (Heymann & Earle 2000). As a result, the child's achievement could be adversely affected.

In a study analyzing the data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY), Heymann and Earle (2000) reported that students' achievement or performance was related to low income parents having sick leave and job flexibility to be involved in their children's education and thus being able to attend to their children's developmental needs, whether social or academic. Heymann and Earle's goal was to investigate and to determine whether low-income parents faced different non-financial encumbrances than did high income working parents. They used data taken from 1,878 families in which the mothers worked 20 or more hours per week as reported in the NLSY.

As part of this research, Heymann and Earle (2000) examined the achievement levels of children scoring at the bottom quartile on the Peabody Individual Achievement Test in Reading Comprehension. The children were chosen from the population of parents who had left the confines of welfare to work. They noted that mothers who had at least one child in the bottom performance quartile were likely to be in occupations where paid leave or flexibility was non-existent. In fact, 37% of low-income mothers and 21% of higher income mothers with a child in the bottom quartile lacked paid leave and flexibility to engage in parental involvement opportunities at school. They further stated that 63% of low-income mothers whose child or children performed in the bottom quartile lacked flexibility on their jobs in contrast to 51% of higher income families with job flexibility that did not have children performing on the bottom quartile. They

concluded that parents who were not allowed the opportunity to address the needs of their children were placing them at risk academically.

Summary

At center stage of accountability in education was the Bush administration's *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2002 (NCLB). This legislation placed a tremendous burden on states to hire highly qualified teachers in every American classroom. The rationale for this daunting undertaking was ultimately to close the achievement gap between White and minority students by giving parents more options and incorporating teaching strategies that were supported by research. Schools were expected to make continuous progress, and, if they did not, they were to implement supplemental programs that would effect progress. If progress did not occur within five consecutive years, then corrective action in the way the school was managed might become necessary. Tantamount to addressing questions relative to a discussion of disparity in student achievement was the examination of the research as it pertained to what schools were doing in particular to make certain that students achieved.

The issue at the forefront of the study, however, was that schools and teachers should not be expected to do it alone. The current study addressed how significant parenting and parent involvement was to the achievement equation. Prior research that was reviewed clearly indicated that student achievement or school performance was tied to parent involvement or engagement and to aspects of culture that supported literacy (Epstein, 1995; Goodman et al., 1995; Wang et al., 1993). Henderson (1988) further indicated that effective parent involvement that also included the community influenced a child's learning for the duration of his or her life. This review delineated effective

parenting as Flaxman and Inger (1992) defined parent involvement as that which was fortifying and supportive of academic skills at home. Work by Jesse (1995) indicated that parent involvement was not a concept that should be taken lightly but was critical to student achievement and performance if that parent involvement supported academic skills that the child has learned at school.

The literature reviewed here asserted that positive indicators of parent involvement such as affirmation of reading in the home via shared reading have an impact on children's long term success in school (Trelease, 2001; Willis et al.,1996). Further review showed that what parents modeled in the home culture had the greatest influence on long term readiness for school or failure in school (Maccoby, 1992; Steinberg et al.,1996). A common strand throughout this review was how parents were involved in their children's education and how they supported literacy in their home or did not support literacy due to their own perspectives of the schools, inadequate personal resources, or lack of knowledge as to how they could create a home environment for their children that was literacy rich.

In fact, results from the Aulls and Sollars (2003) study indicated that when there were varied occasions where children were exposed and were actively engaged in literacy activities, there was a measurable influence on responsiveness to text and what the author's called *code knowledge*. They also found that the quality of a home environment that supported literacy influenced children's responsiveness to text and code knowledge. Parents wanted to help their children learn and be successful, but schools developing parent involvement programs needed to address individual family needs of the children

they served and to look for ways to make parents and parent involvement an integral component of the learning process.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a post hoc design. Helmstadter (1970) made this distinction when he described the use of quantitative research: "If the symbols are used not only to distinguish among categories but to infer a relationship of order among them as well, the description is quantitative" (p. 178). Johnson and Christensen (2004) stated that the quantitative approach best afforded the opportunity to describe the relationships among specific variables. It was also pertinent to note that this study was nonexperimental in that the independent variables were not manipulated. Since this study addressed several variables, the investigator depended on correlational methods that employed the use of a correlation coefficient as an index to determine the strength and direction of the relationships among the variables (Johnson & Christensen).

This study investigated indicators of parental involvement and aspects of the home culture that seemed to prepare students for academic achievement. Because the study explored the relationship between a dependent variable, student achievement, with six independent variables consisting of reading aloud and shared reading, oral language use and word play, monitored television viewing, library and bookstore visits, reading and discussion, and quiet study area, hypotheses with respect to these relationships were formulated for testing using factor analysis.

The factor analysis resulted in a redevelopment of the hypotheses. The following factors emerged because of the properties with the relationships of the survey items: (a) verbal activities in the home, (b) facilitation of reading, and (c) non-reading activities. This investigator selected a measurement of academic achievement in the form of school performance on the ITBS as variables that might correlate with parent involvement and home culture factors.

Sample

The sample was composed of all parents of fourth grade students who took the *ITBS* the previous year in 10 northeast and northwest Louisiana schools. Parents in the survey were selected if they had a child who took the *ITBS* in the third grade during spring testing in 2004. Information about the schools in the sample assisted the investigator in selecting a purposeful sample of parents for this study. The schools chosen for the sample were purposely chosen because they administered the *ITBS* to third graders each year and the principals gave permission to survey the parents of the selected schools. Student enrollment demographics for the 10 schools in the sample are presented in Table 1. Information in Table 1 illustrated an enrollment breakdown of students. This information was not used to determine the sample. Teacher characteristics, including certification status and highest degree held are presented in Table 2. Information in Table 2 illustrated the teacher characteristics in the schools that were selected and should not be misinterpreted as criteria for selecting the schools. Table 1 and Table 2 presented demographic information to gain a descriptive picture of the schools in the sample. To yield a comprehensible view of the individual school populations, the schools' academic

Table 1

Demographics Enrollment Data for Schools in Sample 2003-04

School	Free/ Reduced Lunch	Gifted and Talented	Disa- bility	White Males	White Females	Minority Males	Minority Females	Total
NW1	386	4	2	94	93	141	139	467
NW2	255	7	4	60	45	133	150	388
NW3	550	6	115	68	50	235	224	577
NW4	299	15	30	167	174	51	66	458
NW5	72	10	7	103	109	53	55	320
NE1	495	1	80	0	0	250	245	495
NE2	387	3	31	0	0	186	201	387
NE3	387	8	48	37	15	211	209	472
NE4	410	16	0	2	0	220	188	556
NE5	547	1	24	0	0	314	285	599

Note. NW = a Northwestern Louisiana school. NE = a Northeastern Louisiana school.

Table 2

Teacher Characteristics in Schools in Sample 2003-04

	Certification Status		Highest Degree Earned			
School	Certified	Uncertified	Bachelor's	Master's	Masters +30	Doctorate
NW1	27	0	22	5	0	0
NW2	25	1	23	1	2	0
NW3	31	0	21	8	2	0
NW4	20	0	14	3	2	1
NW5	17	0	15	7	4	2
NE1	25	0	17	5	3	0
NE2	34	1	25	7	2	0
NE3	33	3	14	12	7	0
NE4	26	5	24	7	0	0
NE5	28	6	11	8	9	0

Note. NW = a Northwestern Louisiana school. NE = a Northeastern Louisiana school.

performance was measured by the Louisiana accountability system and schools' percentile ranks on the *ITBS* (see Table 3).

The percentile ranks and completed surveys were examined together from each school. The investigator attempted to determine from parent survey responses and school's percentile ranks on the ITBS as shown in Table 3 how involved parents were with their children's education. Information contained in Table 1 and Table 2 was included here to portray demographics and characteristics of the schools in the sample. Information in Table 3 showed data from the Louisiana State Department of Education

Table 3

Academic Performance of Schools in Sample 2003-04

School	Grade Levels	School Performance Score	Growth Label	School Improvement	ITBS National Percentile Rank
NW1	PK-8	73.5	Minimum	Yes	42
NW2	3-6	80.2	No Growth	Yes	56
NW3	PK-6	60.2	School in Decline	Yes	32
NW4	PK-8	86.2	Exemplary	No	72
NW5	K-5	112.4	Minimum	No	78
NE1	PK-6	64.4	Minimum	Yes	48
NE2	PK-5	59.0	Minimum	Yes	46
NE3	PK-6	79.3	Recognized	No	58
NE4	PK, 3-5	58.2	Minimum	Yes	47
NE5	PK-6	53.6	Minimum	Yes	35

Note. NW = a Northwestern Louisiana school. NE = a Northeastern Louisiana school.

used to determine the academic performance of the schools in the sample. Only the *ITBS* percentile rank (as shown in Table 3) was used as an indicator of student achievement and used in the data analysis.

The northwestern Louisiana schools and northeastern Louisiana schools were chosen based upon the fact that they administered the *ITBS* to their third graders each spring. Thirty percent of the school performance score was student performance on the *ITBS*. The northwestern Louisiana elementary schools were designated as NW1, NW2, NW3, NW4, and NW5. Of the northwestern Louisiana schools, NW1 and NW5 achieved

minimum academic growth in 2003-2004 (see Table 3). NW2 experienced no growth, and NW3 was designated a school in decline. Only NW4 achieved exemplary academic growth in that school year. To determine the school's growth label, the schools' performance scores (SPS) for 2003 were used (see Table 3). The Louisiana Department of Education (2004) labeled a school (a) *in decline* if its SPS declined more than 2.5 points, (b) *no growth* if it experienced a change in its SPS of 0 to -2.5 points, (c) *minimum growth* if its SPS improved at least 0.1 point but not did not meet its growth target, (d) *recognized academic growth* if it reached its growth target, and (d) *exemplary academic growth* if it reached its growth target, had all subgroups grow at least 2 points, and was not in school improvement.

The northeastern Louisiana elementary schools were designated NE1, NE2, NE3, NE4, and NE5. Four of northeast schools achieved minimum academic growth in 2003-2004; only NE5 achieved recognized academic growth (see Table 3). Individual school data were accessed via the Louisiana Department of Education (2004) web site and individual schools' records.

Instrumentation

A Likert scale was used to indicate the degree to which parents agree that statements made in the survey were true to their child's or children's situation or how often the parent and child or children engaged in activities listed in the survey. The scale ranged from1 or 2 to indicate disagreement, 3 or 4 to indicate some agreement, and 5 to indicate total agreement with a statement. The survey reported responses with respect to key issues highlighted in the review of the literature and specifically to discover what parents reported that they did to indicate involvement in their child's or children's

learning (Clark 1983; Karther, 2002). Items from the survey were selected from the following research (see Appendix A): (a) Item 1 (Anderson et al., 1995), (b) Item 2 (Clark, 1983), (c) Item 3 (Nord, 1998), (d) Items 4, 5, 6, and 9 (Trelease, 2001), (e) Items 7 and 10 (Aulls & Sollars, 2003), (d) Item 8 (Nettles & Perna, 1997; Lonigan, 1999) (e) Item 11 (Dodici et al. 2003; Heath, 1983) (f) Item 13 (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989), and Item 14 (Bennett, 1999). One additional item requested demographic information with respect to ethnicity, parent level of education and income level. The survey was administered to parents of fourth grade students who took the *ITBS* in the previous school year. The schools in the sample administered the *ITBS* in third grade. The parent survey items were indicators of parenting behaviors and should not be construed as actual data on parent behaviors. The researcher developed the instrument and pilot tested it in the spring of 2004 at one northeastern Louisiana school and two northwestern Louisiana schools. Principals were asked to assist in the pilot testing by selecting parents in their schools who would give honest feedback. Ten respondents to the pilot test indicated that the survey questions were comprehensible enough for parents to respond. One item was often unanswered due to a printing error that inadvertently placed the response scale on a separate page from the question. One additional item requested demographic information. Survey items fell into four categories: playtime, literacy environment, literacy, and parent/school involvement. The survey questions were aligned with the study's research questions and hypotheses.

The field test included five parents of students at one northeastern Louisiana elementary school and five parents from two northwestern elementary schools. These schools were also used in the sample. The results were reviewed by the researcher and his

doctoral committee. Since the survey was revised for clarity and preciseness, the parents of the field test were asked to respond to the revised survey constructed for the study. Gay (1981) asserted that content validity is the degree to which test content measures what it is intended to measure. To establish content validity of the parent survey, it was reviewed by a panel of three parents, two principals and three university consultants for readability and feasibility. The investigator asked the panel to look at each item on the survey to determine whether the survey assessed some degree of parent involvement in the home and assessed aspects of the literary culture in the home. Reliability of the parent survey was not established using the field test.

The ITBS, published by the Riverside Publishing Company, was suited for students in grades K-8. The ITBS was normed on the same samples as the *Cognitive Abilities Test,* which was an aptitude test. Reliability testing of the ITBS indicated that test-retest stability coefficients fell between .70 and .90. On alternate forms, reliability of the ITBS fell between .80 and .90s (Gregory, 1996). Although the ITBS provided for testing in other subject areas such as mathematics, social studies, and science, this study used scores only for the reading section of the test.

Procedural Details

Surveys were administered to 460 parents of fourth grade students in 10 schools in northwestern and northeastern Louisiana who took the *ITBS* in the previous year. Fifty-two percent (239) of the surveys were returned. The investigator chose northwestern and northeastern Louisiana schools to achieve a mixture of socio-economic levels as well as a variety in school performance as identified by the Louisiana Department of Education (see Tables 1 and 3). School performance scores were included in Table 3 as an

additional indicator of school demographic and were not used as an indicator of student performance for this study. The investigator attempted to ensure equity in the sample by including schools with racially diverse enrollments regardless of social-economic status and student performance level (Kerlinger, 1973). Principals, teachers, and parents received cover letters explaining the purpose of the study. The researcher delivered packets of surveys along with self-addressed stamped envelopes to the school, and the principal or a designee disseminated the surveys to the fourth grade teachers who sent them home. Parents had five days to respond and mail the surveys. To maintain anonymity, names of the schools were not used; instead, each school was designated an alphabetic letter and number.

Null Hypotheses

The directional hypotheses presented in Chapter 1 were stated in the null for testing.

$H_0$1 There will be no significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* and parent's report of verbal activities in the home.

$H_0$2 There will be no significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* and parents' report of facilitation of reading in the home.

$H_0$3 There will be no significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* and parents' report of non-reading activities in the home.

$H_0$4 There will be no significant relationship among race, income level, educational level, and their interactions on parents' report of the verbal activities in the home.

$H_0$5 There will be no significant relationship among race, income level, educational level, and their interactions on parents' report of facilitation of reading in the home.

$H_0$6 There will be no significant relationship among race, income level, educational level, and their interactions, on parents' report of non-reading activities in the home.

Data Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis was employed to determine the relationship between the independent variables of (a) reading aloud and shared reading, (b) oral language, (c) monitored television viewing, (d) library and/or bookstore visits, (e) discussion of what a child reads, (e) establishment of a quiet area for the child to study or read, and (f) parent involvement indicators and the dependent variable of student achievement represented by percentile rank on the *ITBS.* The dependent variable was not entered into the factor analysis.

Kerlinger (1973) concluded that factor analysis is a "method for extracting common variances from sets of measures" (p. 659). A general aim of the use of factor analysis was to simplify complex data sets from the parent survey to be recorded on a data collection matrix (Kline, 1994). The factorial process was implemented because there were inherent differences in the sample, and an exploratory factor analysis helped the investigator to analyze the differences that emerged from the parent survey results

(Thurstone, 1947). Ferguson and Tokane (1989) stated that factor analysis allows the investigator to reach a "meaningful interpretation of the ways in which these independent and dependent variables are related" (p. 520). According to Ferguson and Tokane, a factor analysis achieves the purpose of meaningful interpretation in two distinct ways: (a) factor analysis reduces the set of variables to a smaller number of variables called factors and (b) within factor analysis, factors acquire meaning as a result of structural properties existing within the relationships.

The exploratory factor analysis of the parent survey indicated that there were three distinct constructs: (a) Factor 1, verbal activities; (b) Factor 2, facilitation of reading; and (c) Factor 3, non-reading activities. The exploratory factor analysis indicated that the null hypotheses should be rewritten to reflect the cluster of responses from the parent survey. The rewritten null hypotheses and assigned factors are listed below.

$H_0$1 There will be no significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* and parents' report of verbal activities in the home (Factor 1).

$H_0$2 There will be no significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* and parents' report of facilitation of reading in the home. (Factor 2).

$H_0$3 There will be no significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* and parents' report of non-reading activities in the home (Factor 3).

$H_0$4 There will be no significant relationship among race, income level, educational level, and their interactions, on parents' report of the verbal activities in the home.

$H_0$5 There will be no significant relationship among race, income level, educational level, and their interactions, on parents' report of facilitation of reading in the home.

$H_0$6 There will be no significant relationship among race, income level, educational level, and their interactions, on parents' report of non-reading activities in the home.

Once the exploratory factor analysis was completed, a Spearman's rho correlation ($p < .02$) was performed to determine correlations between the factors that clustered from the parent survey and achievement results reported in school percentile rank. After reviewing the 2004 ITBS national percentile rank data from each school in the sample and data collected from the parent survey, the Spearman's rho was performed. The 2004 school percentile ranks of student performance on the ITBS in the sample were used to determine student academic performance and to determine relationships among student academic performance and the independent variables. The statistical analysis was performed using *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS), a data management and data analysis product. Independent variables which included reading aloud and shared reading, oral language use and word play, monitored television viewing, library and bookstore/library visits, reading and discussion, and quiet study area.

CHAPTER 4

Results of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence on the amount of and quality of parental involvement indicators and home culture factors that might influence students' later performance on the *ITBS* at the third grade level. In addition, the purpose of this study was to examine how parent involvement indicators and home culture factors might also affect achievement disparity among students. Although this study neither agreed nor disagreed with holding schools and teachers accountable, it did not concentrate on what occurred in classrooms. Instead, the focus was on what children experienced with their parents in their home environments. This study sought to investigate parental indicators and home culture factors as they related to student achievement. Data were examined using factor analysis, MANOVA, and Spearman's rho. The findings of the parent survey and the results of hypothesis testing are presented in this chapter.

Descriptive Data About the Sample

The sample was composed of 460 parents of fourth grade students at 10 northwestern and northeastern Louisiana schools who took the *ITBS* during the 2003-2004 school year. The number of parent surveys returned was 239 (Table 4), which was a 52% response rate. Of these 239 respondents, 53.9% were from northwestern schools and

Table 4

Frequency of Response from Parents on Survey (N = 239)

School	No.	%
NW1	13	5.4
NW2	47	19.7
NW3	33	13.8
NW4	3	1.3
NW5	33	13.8
NE1	19	7.9
NE2	32	13.4
NE3	14	5.9
NE4	19	7.9
NE5	26	10.9
Total	239	100.0

45.7% were from northeastern schools. This investigator included information in Table 4 to show the dissimilarity in responses from each school in the sample. The greater percentage of respondents from the northwestern schools could be attributed to the schools' strong collaboration with the university. The schools in the northwestern region were located in close proximity to each other and a regional university. Because this researcher is affiliated with the university, principals and teachers at the northwestern schools were instrumental in making contacts with parents to remind them to send in their completed surveys. All of the northwestern schools provided incentives to the students

whose parents returned surveys. The northeastern schools were not as aggressive in making contact with parents to remind them to return surveys.

To provide anonymity for the participating schools, the northwestern Louisiana elementary schools were designated as alphabetic letters and numbers NW1, NW2, NW3, NW4 and NW5 and the northeastern schools as NE1, NE2, NE3, NE4, and NE5. The schools were chosen because the *ITBS* was administered to third grade students each school year. The target population included parents who had elementary age children in Louisiana schools. From the schools' enrollment data for third grade, the investigator determined the demographic data necessary to formulate and assess a sample of the parent population. The number of certified teachers and uncertified teachers, along with the degrees they held, were presented in Chapter 3 to yield a descriptive picture of the individual school populations. Percentile ranks from *ITBS* in northwestern and northeastern Louisiana schools were used as a measure of academic performance. The Louisiana State Department of Education used composite scores of percentile ranks as indicators of achievement, thus, composite scores were used in this study. Percentile rank showed the student performance on the *ITBS* in comparison with other students' performances nationally. The percentile ranks and completed surveys were examined together from each school. The investigator attempted to determine from parent survey responses and school's percentile ranks on the *ITBS* what influence parents had on their children's education.

Northwestern Louisiana schools and northeastern Louisiana schools were chosen because they administered the *ITBS* to their third grade students each spring and the principal gave permission to survey parents. Schools' SPS scores are used by the state to

assign growth labels. The schools selected represented a range of these different growth labels. Thirty percent of the SPS was determined by student performance on the *ITBS*.

Data in Table 5 reflect the income level of the 201 parents who responded to that question, 42.80% of whom reported incomes of 0-$14,999. Another 23.38% reported incomes of $15,000- $29,999. Thus, two-thirds of respondents in the study reported

Table 5

Family Income Levels of Survey Respondents (n = 201)

	Income Level								
	0-$14,999		$15,000-$29,999		$30,000-$49,999		$50,000+		
School	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	Total No.
NW1	3	1.49	4	1.99	3	1.49	2	1.00	12
NW2	13	6.47	10	4.98	11	5.47	7	3.48	41
NW3	12	5.97	11	5.47	3	1.49	3	1.49	29
NW4	1	.50	0		1	.50	1	.50	3
NW5	1	.50	2	1.00	7	3.48	21	10.45	31
NE1	10	4.98	2	1.00	1	.50	1	.50	14
NE2	15	7.46	4	1.99	1	.50	0		20
NE3	4	1.99	5	2.49	3	1.49	0		12
NE4	14	6.97	3	1.49	1	.50	0		18
NE5	13	6.47	6	2.98	2	1.00	0		21
Total	86	42.80	47	23.38	33	16.42	35	17.42	201

incomes of less than $30,000. In comparison, the poverty index of 2004 indicated that a family of two persons with one child under 18 was $13, 020. In the same year, a family with two children, registered at $15, 219 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

The data shown in Table 6 indicate the race of the 227 respondents who answered that question. More than two-thirds (71.24%) of the respondents were non-Whites; the overwhelming majority of them were Black. This significant percentage of non-White parent respondents was an indicator of the racial makeup of the schools and the rural community in which they lived, particularly in the northwestern Louisiana region. In the northeastern Louisiana region, parents with the financial resources had the option of sending their children to an alternate district or a private school. Of the 219 parents who provided information about their educational level, 70 (31.96%) indicated either *some high school* ($n = 24$) or *high school graduate* ($n = 46$) (see Table 7). Fifty respondents reported that they had attended *vocational /technical college* ($n = 50$). Eighty-two respondents had attended college for 1-4 years; 17 had completed some *graduate work.* Socio-economic levels of families and the location of schools (urban, small town, rural) appeared to be related to parents' educational levels.

Table 6

Respondents' Race (n = 227)

	Race									
	Black		Asian		White		Hispanic		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
NW1	6	2.64	0		7	3.08	0		13	5.72
NW2	28	12.33	0		14	6.17	1	.44	43	18.94
NW3	30	13.22	0		3	1.32	0		33	14.54
NW4	1	.44	0		2	.88	0		3	1.32
NW5	4	1.76	1	.44	26	11.45	1	.44	32	14.10
NE1	18	7.93	0		0		0		18	7.93
NE2	29	12.78	0		0		0		29	12.78
NE3	9	3.96	1	.44	4	1.76	0		14	6.17
NE4	19	8.37	0		0		0		19	8.37
NE5	23	10.13	0		0		0		23	10.13
Total	167	73.57	2	.88	56	24.67	2	.88	227	100.00

Table 7

Respondents' Educational Level (n = 219)

School	Some High School		High School Graduate		Vocational/ Tech College		College (1-2 Years)		College (3-4 Years)		Graduate Work		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
NW1	0		6	2.74	2	.91	2	.91	2	.91	1	.46	13	5.94
NW2	2	.91	11	5.02	8	3.65	15	6.85	6	2.74	3	1.37	45	20.55
NW3	2	.91	7	3.20	7	3.20	6	2.74	6	2.74	1	.46	29	13.24
NW4	0	-	0		0		1	.46	1	.46	0		2	.91
NW5	0	-	2	.91	2	.91	5	2.28	11	5.02	11	5.02	31	14.16
NE1	5	2.28	6	2.74	4	1.83	3	1.37	0		0		18	8.22
NE2	5	2.28	4	1.83	12	5.48	3	1.37	3	1.37	0		27	12.32
NE3	0	-	2	.91	6	2.74	1	.46	6	2.74	0		15	6.85
NE4	5	2.28	3	1.37	5	2.28	3	1.37	0		0		16	7.31
NE5	5	2.28	5	2.28	4	1.83	7	3.20	1	.46	1	.46	23	10.50
Total	24	10.96	46	21.00	50	22.83	46	21.00	36	16.44	17	7.77	219	100.00

Analysis of Quantitative Data

As surveys were returned, the researcher entered the data into a database. Statistical analyses were performed using *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS), a data management and data analysis product. Table 8 displays the means and standard deviations for responses to the items on the parent survey. To calculate the Spearman's rho, the means of parent responses to the survey items were calculated for all parents in each school who responded to the survey. A general aim of the use of factor analysis was to simplify complex data sets from the parent survey to be recorded on a data collection matrix (Kline, 1994). The factorial process was implemented because there were inherent differences in the sample population, and a factorial analysis most adequately helped this investigator to analyze the dissimilarities that emerged from the parent survey results. The principal components extraction method and Initial Eigenvalues were used to extract the components and their percent of variance. Table 9 shows the extraction sums of the squared loadings and rotation of the squared loadings for the three factors. As seen in Table 9, four components with Eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted from the 13-item survey. This extraction explained 52.866% of the cumulative variance across the 13 items. The scree plot suggested a three-factor solution was more appropriate than a four-factor model (see Figure 1). In addition, the decision to use three factors instead of four was also indicated in the factor analysis showing that items loaded on Factor 4 also shared loadings more clearly on Factor 1 and Factor 2.

Table 8

Respondents' Mean Scores on Thirteen Parent Survey Items (N = 239)

Item	*M*	*SD*
1: Play word games	3.71	1.17
2: Oral communication	4.18	.88
3: Visit bookstore/library	2.62	1.21
4: Watch television	3.47	1.09
5: Play video games/listen to music	2.11	1.32
6: Encourage to read	4.71	.62
7: Reading is our home pastime	3.80	1.04
8: Read to child	4.35	.87
9: Stopped reading to	3.04	1.38
10: Buy newspapers and magazines	3.63	1.40
11: Share conversation	4.20	.86
12: Quiet place to study	4.28	.97
13: Able to help with homework	4.69	.62

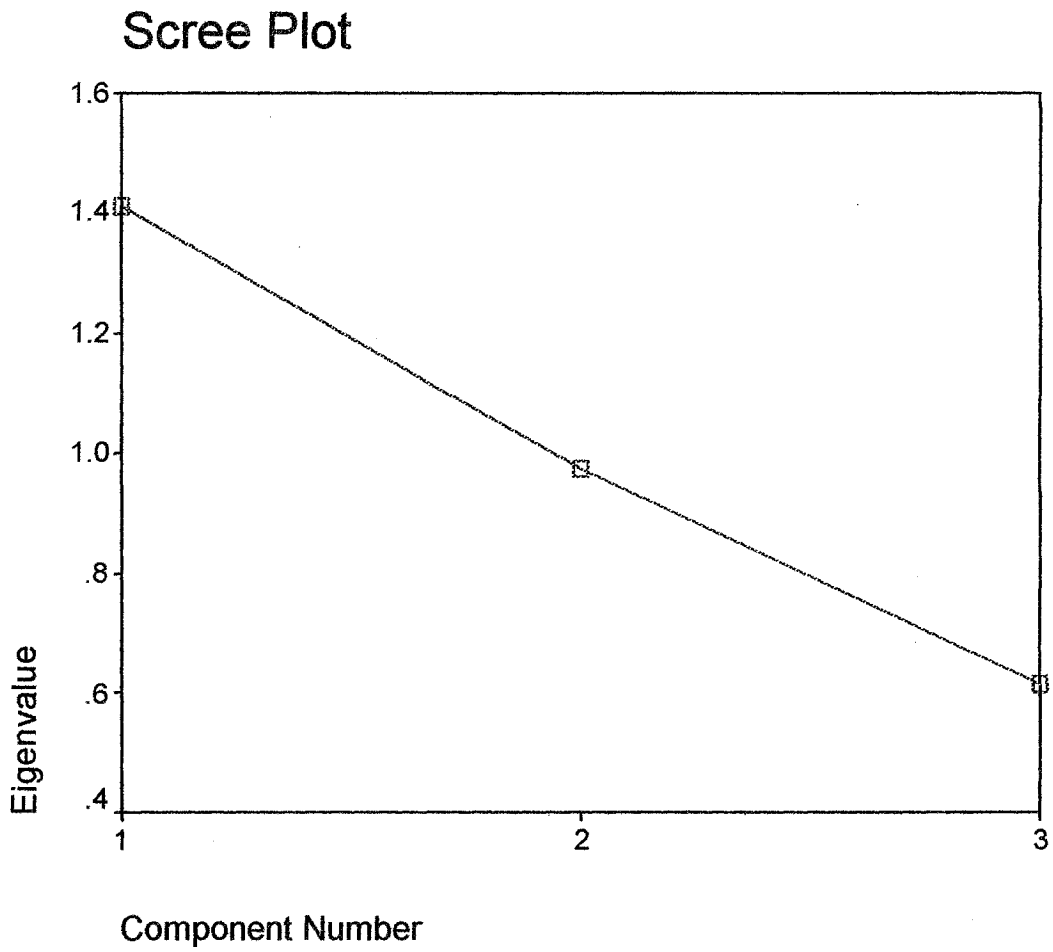
Table 9

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.979	22.914	22.914	2.979	22.914	22.914	2.499	19.223	19.223
2	1.535	11.804	34.718	1.535	11.804	34.718	1.802	13.858	33.081
3	1.274	9.802	44.519	1.274	9.802	44.519	1.487	11.439	44.519
4	1.088	8.366	52.886						
5	.990	7.616	60.501						
6	.834	6.415	66.916						
7	.762	5.859	72.776						
8	.712	5.476	78.251						
9	.687	5.284	83.535						
10	.621	4.776	88.311						
11	.596	4.585	92.896						
12	.494	3.797	96.693						
13	.430	3.307	100.000						

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Figure 1.



The solution then was rotated using Varimax with Kaiser normalization to maximize the loadings into the three factors as shown in Table 10. The data analysis identified the parent survey items that resulted in the highest loadings for each of the three factors. They were each related to (1) verbal activities in the home, (2) facilitation of reading, and (3) non-reading activities. These category labels were chosen by this investigator to provide interpretation of what was found in the factor analysis. Items that showed the strongest factor loading were selected for that factor. Item 2 loaded on Factor 1 with a correlation of .489 (see Table 10).

Table 10

Rotated Component Matrix

Item	Factors		
	1	2	3
1	.626	-.140	8.323E-03
2	.489	.205	-3.17E-02
3	.728	-4.90E-02	5.933E-02
4	4.783E-02	-4.45E-03	.795
5	.174	-.314	.625
6	-9.416E-02	.725	4.829E-02
7	.582	.327	5.606E-02
8	.599	.264	-4.98E-02
9	-.265	-.182	.644
10	.298	.332	7.361E-02
11	.587	.321	-.133
12	.310	.489	-5.67E-02
13	1.186E-02	.671	-.103

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

The factor analysis of the parent survey revealed three factors in the survey: (a) verbal activities in the home, (b) facilitation of reading and (c) non-reading activities. Table 11 presents the factor names based on the items that loaded highest on the factor. Factor 1 was named *verbal activities in the home* because each of the highest loading items was descriptive of activities having to do with verbal discourse and transaction with text in some manner. Although some items, such as survey items 3 and 7 listed under Factor 1 might be interpreted as *facilitation of reading,* the factor analysis showed highest loading to Factor 1. Factor 2 was named *facilitation of reading* as survey items with the highest loading reflected association with activities at school.

Survey item 13 loaded higher to Factor 2 than it did to Factors 1 and 3. Item 13 was interpreted in this study to indicate that while helping with homework, a parent facilitated reading by reading instructions or text in the homework assignment. Factor 3 was named *non-reading activities,* since items with the highest loading established activities that were not reflective of reading or literacy in any way. In the factor analysis, Survey item 9 loaded highest to Factor 3. All survey items were grouped according to the factor loadings.

Table 11

Results of Factor Analysis of Parent Survey

Factor	Factor Loading	Item No.	Survey Question
1: Verbal activities in the home	.626	1	Word games, puzzles and/or language games are part of our play routine.
	.489	2	In our home, we try to communicate in a manner that agrees with what the children are taught at school.
	.728	3	My child and I visit a bookstore or library on a monthly basis.
	.582	7	Reading is one of the most frequent pastimes in our home.
	.599	8	Before my child could read independently, I/we read to him/her.
	.298	10	I buy newspapers and/or parenting magazines.
	.587	11	My child and I share in conversation about what he/she reads.
2: Facilitation of reading	.725	6	I encourage my child to read.
	.489	12	I have provided quiet space for my child to study each night.
	.671	13	I feel able to help my child with homework.
3: Non-reading activities	.795	4	My child is allowed to watch television as much as he/she chooses if chores and homework have been completed.
	.625	5	When my child is not watching television, I encourage him/her to play video games or listen to music.
	.644	9	I stopped reading to him/her after he/she was able to read independently.

Data were entered with each variable in the survey receiving a value. Value 1 and 2 were assigned to represent northwestern Louisiana schools and northeastern Louisiana schools respectively. Each of the individual schools in the sample was assigned numerical values 1-10. Gender values were assigned 1 for *female* and 2 for *male*. Parent values were assigned as1 for *mother*, 2 for *father* and 3 for *other*. Income level values were assigned as 1 for income level *0-$14,000*, 2 for income level *$15,000-$29,000*, 3 for income level *$30,000-$49,000*, and 4 for income level of *$50,000+*. Race values were assigned as 1 for *Black*, 2 for *Asian*, 3 for *White* and 4 for *Hispanic*. Education values were assigned as 1 for *some high school*, 2 for *high school graduate*, 3 for *vocational school*, 4 for *college (1-2 years)*, 5 for *college (3-4 years)*, and 6 for *graduate work*. *SPSS* was used to analyze the data to perform the factor analysis and statistical testing.

Descriptive statistics for items from the parent survey and the items loaded to each factor are indicated in Table 12. Minimum and maximum responses were reported from possible responses for each survey item for Factor 1, Factor 2 and Factor 3. The data were entered in SPSS to analyze individual item responses for each factor. A mean score and standard deviation were calculated for each factor. A mean of 17.5107 indicated a preponderance of responses to survey items corresponding to what parents reported that they did to facilitate reading.

Table 12

Factor Names, Means, and Standard Deviations (n = 222)

Factors	*M*	*SD*
1: Verbal activities	14.3463	2.9915
2: Facilitation of reading	17.5107	2.1915
3: Non-reading activities	8.6197	2.6620

Hypothesis Testing

$H_0$1: There is no significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* and parents' report of verbal activities in the home (Factor 1).The Spearman's rho, a non-parametric test of correlation, was performed to determine whether a relationship existed between the three factors and school percentile rank on the *ITBS.* Percentile rank represented a composite of all subtests (i.e. reading, social studies, mathematics).To calculate the Spearman's rho, parents' mean scores on the 13 item-survey instrument were calculated and correlated to each of the three factors. The level of significance was set at .05 (2-tailed). Results are presented in Table 13. For $H_0$1, rho = .103 (p = .777) which indicated that there was not a significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *ITBS* and verbal activities in the home. Therefore, $H_0$1 was not rejected.

Table 13

Spearman's rho Correlations of Factors and Schools' Percentile Rankings on ITBS (n = 10)

Factor	ρ	*p*
1	.103	.777
2	.261	.466
3	-.401	.250

$H_0$2: There is no significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *ITBS* and parents' report of facilitation of reading in the home (Factor 2). For $H_0$2, rho = .261 (p = .466) (see Table 13). There was not a significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *ITBS* and facilitation of reading in the home. Therefore, $H_0$2 was not rejected

$H_0$3: There is no significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *ITBS* and parents' report of non-reading activities in the home (Factor 3). For $H_0$3, rho = .-401 (p = .250 (see Table 13). $H_0$3 was not rejected because there was no significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *ITBS* and parents' report of non-reading activities in the home.

$H_0$4: There is no significant relationship among race, income level, educational level, and their interactions, among the verbal activities in the home (Factor 1). A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to indicate whether or not there were significant differences in mean scores among the groups. These results are shown in Table 14. Each factor interaction with race, income level, and educational level

Table 14

Interaction Among Race, Income, and Educational Level of Respondents (N = 239)

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III *SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Race	Factor 1	25.359	3	8.453	.662	.577
	Factor 2	.315	3	.105	.042	.988
	Factor 3	16.319	3	5.440	.850	.469
Income	Factor 1	130.192	4	32.548	2.548	.042*
	Factor 2	4.200	4	1.050	.422	.793
	Factor 3	17.051	4	4.263	.666	.617
Education	Factor 1	139.155	5	27.831	2.179	.060
	Factor 2	21.215	5	4.243	1.703	.138
	Factor 3	99.340	5	19.868	3.103	.011*
Race and Income	Factor 1	10.679	3	3.560	.279	.841
	Factor 2	3.135	3	1.045	.419	.739
	Factor 3	51.855	3	17.285	2.700	.048*
Race and Education	Factor 1	79.737	4	19.934	1.561	.188
	Factor 2	12.917	4	3.229	1.296	.275
	Factor 3	18.887	4	4.722	.737	.568
Income and Education	Factor 1	251.001	10	25.100	1.965	.042*
	Factor 2	14.859	10	1.486	.597	.815
	Factor 3	98.806	10	9.881	1.543	.131
Race, Income, and Education	Factor 1	15.255	5	3.051	.239	.945
	Factor 2	2.984	5	.597	.240	.944
	Factor 3	28.959	5	5.792	.905	.480
Error	Factor 1	1711.730	134	12.774		
	Factor 2	333.795	134	2.491		
	Factor 3	857.950	134	6.403		
Total	Factor 1	101242.000	171			
	Factor 2	32231.000	171			
	Factor 3	13568.000	171			

*$p < .05$

was addressed. Table 14 also shows that variables were treated both individually and as a group to test for interaction upon each other. For example, race was treated as an individual variable with Factors 1, 2, and 3 separately. In addition, race and income were treated for interaction with Factors 1, 2, and 3 separately. Table 14 shows the result of these interactions.

As seen in Table 14, there was no significant difference in means for the variables of race, income level, educational level and their interactions on Factor 1; therefore, $H_0$4 was not rejected. The analysis showed that at the $p < .05$ significance level, there was some interaction that occurred between income with Factor 1, education and Factor 3, race and income and Factor 3, and income and education and Factor 1. This study could not determine the nature of those interactions.

$H_0$5: There is no significant relationship among race, income level, educational level, and their interactions, on facilitation of reading in the home (Factor 2). There were no differences in means for the variables of race, income level, educational level and their interactions on Factor 2 (see Table 14); therefore, $H_0$5 failed to be rejected.

$H_0$6: There is no significant relationship among race, income level, educational level, and their interactions, on non-reading activities in the home (Factor 3). Data in Table 14 indicate no difference in means for the variables of race, income level, educational level and their interactions on Factor 3; therefore, $H_0$6 was not rejected.

Post Hoc Analysis

Table 14 illustrates that significance was found in Factor 1, verbal activities, with income levels of $50,000+ and income levels of $15,000-$29,999 at the $p < .05$ level. It was not clear, however, what the significance meant. There was interaction between

Factor 3, non-reading activities, and race and income and interaction between Factor 1 and income and education, but too many variables, such as race (Black, White, Asian and Hispanic) and, income levels and educational levels, did not allow interpretation of the significance. There was variation in income levels from 0$ to $50,000 or more reported. Education levels reported ranged from some high school to graduate work. Because of the many sub-categories for each variable, it was not clear from the Post Hoc analysis how these variables interacted with each other nor why there was interaction between variables and Factor 1 and Factor 3.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusions

This study examined the possible relationship between student achievement expressed as school percentile ranks on *ITBS* and parent reports of involvement and home culture factors that might influence student achievement. This study did not concentrate on what occurred in classrooms, but on what parents reported as their home environments experienced by children. The study investigated reported parental engagement and home culture factors as they related to student achievement on standardized tests. Louisiana based the performance of its schools on their ability to help students achieve academically. Student achievement is determined by students' performance on Louisiana's standardized tests administered every spring. Research was found that supported the premise that socio-economic status, single parent home environments, the mother's level of education, and other cultural factors influence student achievement (Heath, 1983; Hobbs, 1990; Taylor, 1983).

Discussion

This study examined parent involvement indicators and home culture environment factors such as verbal activities, reading activities, and non-reading activities that may influence academic performance on the *ITBS.* The study also

considered race, income level, and education level and their interactions on verbal activities, reading, activities, and non-reading activities. The following null hypotheses were accepted.

$H_0$1 There will be no significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* and parents' report of verbal activities in the home.

$H_0$2 There will be no significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* and parents' report of facilitation of reading in the home.

$H_0$3 There will be no significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* and parent's report of non-reading activities in the home.

$H_0$4 There will be no significant relationship among race, income level, educational level, and their interactions on parents' report of the verbal activities in the home.

$H_0$5 There will be no significant relationship among race, income level, educational level, and their interactions on parents' report of facilitation of reading in the home.

$H_0$6 There will be no significant relationship among race, income level, educational level, and their interactions, on parents' report of non-reading activities in the home.

All six of the null hypotheses were accepted as a result of testing. In addition, Post hoc analysis of means for non-reading activities and educational levels revealed that

educational level did influence the variety and quantity of reading activities that parents chose for their children.

Conclusions

A review of literature related to the effect of parent involvement and home culture on student achievement was presented. To address questions relative to the disparity in student achievement, this investigator examined literature regarding indicators of parent involvement and home culture.

The issue at the forefront of this study, however, was the impact of parental involvement on student achievement as measured by student performance on the *ITBS*. The study addressed the significance of parent involvement and home culture in relation to achievement. The research reviewed clearly indicated that student achievement or school performance was tied to parent involvement or engagement and to aspects of home culture that support literacy (Epstein, 1995; Goodman et al., 1995; Wang et al., 1993).

Strickland and Shanahan (2004) suggested that the more opportunities children had to use oral interaction with adults and with one another, the more their oral language and emerging literacy were enhanced. Although the results of this study accepted the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between a school's percentile ranking on the *ITBS* and parents' report of facilitation of reading in the home, De la Fuente Garcia's (2004) found that the parent's support was important to the child's achievement. The current study limitation of the inability to access individual student *ITBS* scores and to rely on whole school percentile ranking could possibly have caused correlations not to coincide with similar finding by De la Fuente Garcia (2004).

The literature, however, suggested that what parents modeled in the home had the greatest influence on long term preparedness for success or failure in school (Maccoby, 1992; Steinberg, 1996). Perhaps the employment of a more substantial sampling of parents and schools would alter the results of this study.

The Spearman's rho correlation coefficient for Factor 3, which included non-reading activities such as watching television and playing video games, indicated a negative correlation with the schools' percentile rankings on the entire *ITBS.* One would expect that such activities would not contribute to individual student achievement or performance on the *ITBS.* Trelease (2001) believed that what was important to a child's literacy were words and sentences he or she heard from significant family members and that this overt demonstration of literacy had more impact than what children gained through television or computers.

Because of the findings of this study, this researcher accepted the null hypotheses addressing the relationship among educational level, verbal activities, and facilitation of reading in the home, conclusions which differed from those of King (1994). The researcher concluded that family characteristics and home experiences also determine a student's predisposition to learning and success. According to Maccoby (1992), when children saw that learning was important in the family, they were placed on the path for success. For example, if parents were reading or writing, then reading and writing became a part of the children's existence in the family, as well. In essence, the literacy activities parents modeled before their children became what their children knew.

In terms of income levels, Bradley et al. (2001) asserted that the kinds and quality of children's home experience would vary by economic levels. Children from homes of

economic hardship would have fewer opportunities to access tangible goods and services. It was clear from the current study that in order for parents to buy books, make trips to the library, and provide the academic resources needed to help their children to perform academically, financial resources are necessary.

Implications for Parents

Although the six null hypotheses were accepted, there were some implications supported by the literature review that should be noted. These implications were related to this study in that indicators of parent involvement and home culture were examined to find if there was any correlation to students' performance on the *ITBS*. Wang et al. (1993) found that children's attitudes about school improved when parents were involved. This study focused on parents' awareness that showed that there were basic indicators of parent involvement and home environmental factors that when employed with their children, could enhance their children's later academic performance (Trelease, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Parents can be models for literacy in the home, thus creating a literacy-rich environment for their children. A home environment where there was shared book reading (Heath, 1983; McConnell & Rabe, 1999), an overt demonstration of interest in print materials, and attitudes that symbolize the importance and enjoyment of reading are important to their children's eventually becoming literate. One of the ways that parents can overtly demonstrate interest in reading is by conducting oral reading sessions with their children (Anderson et al., 1985).

In addition, parents' written and oral interactions with their children about print materials can promote an appreciation of the joy of reading (Sulzby & Teale, 1991). Reading aloud to pre-school children and discussing what is read can be vital to later

academic success (Trelease, 2001). Taking children to the library or bookstore and monitoring television viewing communicates to them that the home values reading and academic success.

Parents might have limited financial resources and yet be able to facilitate their children's academic performance. Following are a few suggestions that cost nothing but time and interaction with children.

Oral Interaction

Dodici, et al. (2003) suggested the importance of parent interaction. Parents can take every opportunity to exercise oral interaction by talking about what is happening in their world and their children's world. While driving along or walking, parents can read the signs on the streets. Parents can engage children in discussions of current, local, and national news or engage them in fictional and nonfiction adventure stories. Finally, parents can read aloud to children daily, and when they are old enough allow them to read orally so that the joy of reading is communicated by a significant person in their lives.

Written Language

Writing is as important as reading, but until children can write on their own, parents can model the importance of the written word by writing notes, keeping lists and showing children how to do the same (Snow, et al., 1991). When children are old enough, they can be encouraged to keep a journal of their memories, events, and ideas. The refrigerator can be used as a place to display notes and their children's school papers to demonstrate the importance of the written word. Access to computers can be a resource to get children to write by emailing friends and relatives, but if a computer is not

available, pens, pencils, and writing paper should be available to write letters or thank you notes to relatives and friends.

Independent Reading

Having newspapers, magazines, paperback books, and novels in the home can send a message to children that the family reads. Reading should be a time of enjoyment and not used punitively. To become independent readers, children must share in the decisions as parents guide them in their choices of what to read (Trelease, 2001). Although a parent may not agree with the choice of reading material, allowing children to have choices in what they read and enjoy is a step toward their becoming independent readers.

Implications for Schools

Drummond and Stipek (2004) suggested that schools ask parents about their beliefs in being actively involved in their children's learning and help parents translate beliefs into practice. Lopez et al. (2005), of the Harvard Family Research Project, supported the research that declares the importance of family involvement in children's education as crucial to their success. These authors offered their views as to how school-home relationships can be effective in constructing relationships that support children's learning. Their premise involved what they referred to as a set of collaborative dimensions that allowed for the active involvement of families, schools and all other agencies that work with children: (a) responding to family interests and needs where family participants in intervention strategies become committed to reap benefits that can help them to support learning, (b) engaging in dialogue about family experiences which build relationships and trust, (c) building on family funds of knowledge to give value and

support to the knowledge and information parents already possess, (d) training parents for leadership that teaches them to analyze and use standardized test data to establish projects and programs that address the needs of their school, and (e) facilitating connections across children's learning contexts to take advantage of the assorted environments outside of school to which children belong and parents manage. Family involvement programs that follow these five collaborative dimensions were found to be salient in terms of children's school success (Lopez et al.). Findings from their study further suggested the importance of schools' constructing collaborative learning opportunities related to parents' needs.

Finally, Zill et al. (1995) indicated that the mother's lack of adequate education and her language deficiencies were the greatest determinants of preschoolers' having fewer signs of early literacy and other difficulties in school later. Their study indicated the importance of having some sort of interventions in the schools or at the home site to accommodate the needs of parents and children.

It is the observation of this researcher that student achievement can be influenced when districts examine the diverse funds of knowledge, skills, and experiences that parents can bring to the table. Grant money can be used where other funds are not available to bring parents together to learn parenting skills. Schools normally closed on weekends are ideal settings where parents can learn about what is expected of their children. Parents then would no longer feel intimidated by the school setting and could realize that they are an integral part of their children's academic success.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations for further research are offered based on the findings from this study.

1. The study should be replicated using a larger sample of schools and parents. A sample that includes all school districts in the state would be desirable. The survey, although field tested, should be expanded to include items that address other ways in which parents might involve their children in literacy (e.g., special summer programs and community based programs) that were not addressed in the survey. The fault in the survey was also listed as a limitation of the study.
2. The use of school percentile ranks on the *ITBS* is problematic because a more accurate match between parental involvement indicators and home culture and students' individual scores on the ITBS would give a clearer picture of how the data from the parent surveys match with their child's achievement. The match would allow a more robust analysis.
3. A qualitative study that includes interviews of parents and students and observations in the home might be able to identify elements of the home culture related to student literacy that are not readily quantifiable.
4. Post hoc analysis of educational level on Factor 3 (non-reading activities) indicated that there was some interaction, but no conclusions could be drawn as to what the interaction meant. The interaction may suggest that the education level of parents determine the kinds of non-reading activities (e.g. vacations, summer youth programs, computer technology, transportation to

cultural events) that they can provide for their children. This interaction should be explored further.

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APPENDIX A

PARENT SURVEY

APPENDIX A
Parent Survey

Parent Survey Questions: For each of the following, please determine the degree to which you agree that the statements are true to your child's or children's situation or how often you and your child or children engage in the activity.

1. Word games, puzzles, and or language games are part of our play routine.

Disagree		Somewhat agree		Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. In our home, we try to communicate in a manner that agrees with what the children are taught at school.

Never		Usually		Always
1	2	3	4	5

3. My child and I visit a bookstore or library on a monthly basis.

Never		At least three times		More than three times
1	2	3	4	5

4. My child is allowed to watch television as much as he chooses if chores and homework have been completed.

Never		Sometimes		Frequently
1	2	3	4	5

5. When my child is not watching television, I encourage him to play his video games or listen to music.

Disagree		Somewhat agree		Agree
1	2	3	4	5

6. I encourage my child to read.

Disagree		Somewhat agree		Agree
1	2	3	4	5

7. Reading is one of the most frequent pastimes in our home.

Disagree		Somewhat agree		Agree
1	2	3	4	5

8. Before my child could read independently, I/we read to him/her.

Disagree		Somewhat agree		Agree
1	2	3	4	5

9. I stopped reading to my child after he/she was able to read independently.

Disagree		Somewhat agree		Agree
1	2	3	4	5

10. I buy news papers and/or parenting magazines.

Disagree		Somewhat agree		Agree
1	2	3	4	5

11. My child and I share in conversation about what he/she reads.

Never		Sometimes		Frequently
1	2	3	4	5

12. I have provided quiet space for my child to study each night.

Disagree		Somewhat agree		Agree
1	2	3	4	5

13. I feel able to help my child with homework.

Disagree		Somewhat agree		Agree
1	2	3	4	5

14. Please use the back of the survey and/or additional paper to express any other ways you involve your child in reading and writing activities.

Please **circle** the following that best describes the culture of your household.

African American/Black Asian Caucasian/White Hispanic

Please indicate the **parent completing this survey** by circling either "Father" or "Mother" and circling the letter that best indicates the educational level.

Mother	Father
A. Some High School	A. Some High School
B. High School Graduate	B. High School Graduate
C. Vocational/Technical College	C. Vocational/Technical College
D. College (1-2 years)	D. College (1-2 years)
E. College (3-4)	E. College (3-4)
F. Graduate Work	F. Graduate Work

Please **circle** the approximate income level of your household.

$0 to $14,999 $15,000 to $29,999 $30,000 to $49,999 $50,000 +

What relation are you to the children living in your home? _____

If you would be willing to do a one-hour oral interview with me at a time that agrees with your schedule, please indicate your name and how you might be reached below.

Understand that this is optional. Please **seal and return your survey in the stamped self-addressed envelope** and mail your survey **even if you do not** wish to do an oral interview.

Name_____
Phone:_____ Email:_____

APPENDIX B

Study/Project Information for Human Subjects Committee

APPENDIX B

Study/Project Information For Human Subjects Committee

Describe your study/project in detail for the Human Subjects Committee. Please include the following information.

TITLE: A Study of Parental Involvement, Student Achievement and Performance of Preschool Children

PROJECT DIRECTOR(S): Leonard James Clark
EMAIL: james773@netzero.com
PHONE: 318-345-4261
DEPARTMENT(S): College of Education

PURPOSE OF STUDY/PROJECT: A primary purpose of this study is to examine the amount parental involvement in the preparation of children for learning in terms of their emerging literacy and to seek what behaviors parents manifest that may or may not be conducive to student achievement.

SUBJECTS: The subjects of the study are parents who have school age children in the first and/ or second grade in Northeast Louisiana public schools.

PROCEDURE: Percentile ranks indicating performance of third graders on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills will be ascertained from the sample population. Surveys will be given to fourth grade students to give to their parents to determine what parents did and continue to do to ensure student achievement. The investigator will attempt to ensure equity in the purposive sampling from the constructed responses and parent surveys by sampling schools with a mixture of minority and White populations regardless of social economic status and student performance level. (Kerlinger,1973). Student academic performance is determined by the schools' percentile ranks on the 2004 Iowa test given to third graders annually. The survey questions were gleaned from the review of literature, and a factor analysis will be conducted using SPSS to determine what relationship exists, if any, between the independent and dependent variables. The number and types of responses will be tabulated in appropriate categories whereupon the statistical analysis will be performed. Emphasis will be placed on parental involvement indicators, factors and or codes that influence an emergent literacy environment with respect to language use (Heath, 1983; Clark, 1983; Nettles & Perna, 1997; Walker, 1999; NEA, 2001), culture (Heath, 1983; Bennett 1999; Steinberg 1998), literary materials (McConell & Rabe, 1999) and home environment (Henderson, 1988; Singham, 1998; McConell & Rabe, 1999; Walker, 1999). A follow up audio-taped interview of ten parents who give written consent will be performed once the survey samples are returned. The ten parents will

be selected from the contact information provided by parents. A list of the oral interview questions is attached to this form.

INSTRUMENTS AND MEASURES TO INSURE PROTECTION OF CONFIDENTIALITY, ANONYMITY: The investigator will hand deliver the surveys and envelopes to the selected Northwestern and Northeastern schools to distribute to the teachers of fourth grade students. After completing the surveys, parents will seal their surveys in a stamped self addressed envelope provided by the investigator and place the completed surveys in the mail. Data from academic performance on the ITBS indicated by percentile ranks of third graders will be ascertained from the schools in the sample population. Schools performance data are public information on the Louisiana State Department of Education web site.

RISKS/ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS: There are no risks or alternative treatments associated with participation in this study. It requires completion of a survey by parents. There are no risks or alternative treatments to the students since only schools' public performance data in the form of percentile ranks will be used. Participation from parents is voluntary.

BENEFITS/COMPENSATION: There will be no compensation for participating in this study; however, the investigator will make results available to the school participants, school districts, and parents.

SAFEGUARDS OF PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING: This study involves no treatment or physical contact. All information collected from the survey will be held strictly confidential. No one will be allowed access to the survey or oral information provided by the subjects other than the researchers. Parents and school personnel upon request may receive results of the study when completed.

Note: Use the Human Subjects Consent form to briefly summarize information about the study/project to participants and obtain their permission to participate.

APPENDIX C

Human Subjects Consent Form

APPENDIX C

Human Subjects Consent Form

The following is a brief summary of the project in which you are asked to participate. Please read this information before signing the statement below.

TITLE OF PROJECT: A Study of Parental Involvement, Student Achievement and Performance of Preschool Children

PURPOSE OF STUDY/PROJECT: The purpose of this study is to examine the amount of parents' involvement and engagement in the preparation of preschool children for learning in terms of their emerging literacy and to examine what behaviors parents manifest that may or may not be conducive to student achievement or performance particularly in promoting emergent literacy.

PROCEDURE: Percentile ranks indicating performance of third graders on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills will be ascertained from the sample population. Surveys will be given to fourth grade students to give to their parents to determine what parents did or did not do to ensure academic achievement. The Iowa school data and parent survey responses will be coded and a factor analysis will be conducted to determine any significant correlation of the variables and to determine which of the independent variables significantly influence the dependent variables. No attempt will be made to achieve a one to one ratio of individual parent responses to his or her child's performance on the Iowa. The researcher seeks to take a look at individual student performance in the school in terms of parent behaviors that influence student performance. A follow up audio-taped interview will be performed with written consent of ten parents once the survey samples are returned. The ten parents will be selected from the contact information provided by parents. A list of the oral interview questions is attached to this form.

INSTRUMENTS: A parent survey was developed to assess the parents' perspectives relative to key issues highlighted in the review of the literature (Karther, 2002; Ortiz, 2001; Clark 1983). The parent survey was field tested in two Northwestern Louisiana schools and one Northeastern Louisiana school.

RISKS/ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS: There are no risks or alternative treatments associated with participation in this study. It requires completion of a survey by parents. There are no risks or alternative treatments to the students since only schools' public performance data in the form of percentile ranks will be used. Participation from parents is voluntary.

BENEFITS/COMPENSATION: There will be no compensation for participating in this study; however, the investigator will make the results of the study available to the schools and parents in the study.

I, _____, attest with my signature that I have read and understood the following description of the study, "_____", and its purposes and methods. I understand that my participation in this research is strictly voluntary and my participation or refusal to participate in this study will not affect my relationship with Louisiana Tech University or my grades in any way. Further, I understand that I may withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any questions without penalty. Upon completion of the study, I understand that the results will be freely available to me upon request. I understand that the results of my survey will be confidential, accessible only to the principal investigators, myself, or a legally appointed representative. I have not been requested to waive nor do I waive any of my rights related to participating in this study.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant or Guardian **Date**

CONTACT INFORMATION: **The principal experimenters listed below may be reached to answer questions about the research, subjects' rights, or related matters.**

Dr. Kimberly Kimbell-Lopez	**(318-257-2982)W**
Leonard J. Clark, Project Director	**(318-345-4261) H**
	(318-357-4058) W

Members of the Human Use Committee of Louisiana Tech University may also be contacted if a problem cannot be discussed with the experimenters:

Dr. Terry McConathy (257-2924)
Dr. Mary M. Livingston (257-2292)
Stephanie Herrmann (257-5075)

APPENDIX D

PARENT SURVEY COVER LETTER

APPENDIX D

Parent Survey Cover Letter

Dear Parent,

You have been selected to contribute to research into what parents are doing to prepare their children for school achievement. You will be asked to respond to several questions about what you have been doing with your child to prepare him or her for academic achievement. The questions were selected to yield information about your use of reading material, language, and play as well as some questions about the general culture in your home. As principal investigator, I will have access to your anonymous responses. Your school's principal will have access to only general results of the research for planning future parent involvement programs. Once you have completed the entire survey, please use the self-addressed stamped envelope to mail your completed survey. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE A NAME ON THE SURVEY OR THE ENVELOPE. If you should have any questions, you may contact the school's principal who will also give any information about me and the research project. **The deadline for mailing the survey is five days after receiving the survey**. Your consent to participate in this study is appreciated; however, your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without any grade penalty to your children who attend schools involved in the research project.

Sincerely,

L. J. Clark

APPENDIX E

PRINCIPAL'S LETTER

APPENDIX E
Parent Survey Cover Letter

Dear Parent,

You have been selected to contribute to research into what parents are doing to prepare their children for school achievement. You will be asked to respond to several questions about what you have been doing with your child to prepare him or her for academic achievement. The questions were selected to yield information about your use of reading material, language, and play as well as some questions about the general culture in your home. As principal investigator, I will have access to your anonymous responses. Your school's principal will have access to only general results of the research for planning future parent involvement programs. Once you have completed the entire survey, please use the self-addressed stamped envelope to mail your completed survey. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE A NAME ON THE SURVEY OR THE ENVELOPE. If you should have any questions, you may contact the school's principal who will also give any information about me and the research project. **The deadline for mailing the survey is five days after receiving the survey**. Your consent to participate in this study is appreciated; however, your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without any grade penalty to your children who attend schools involved in the research project.

Sincerely,

L. J. Clark